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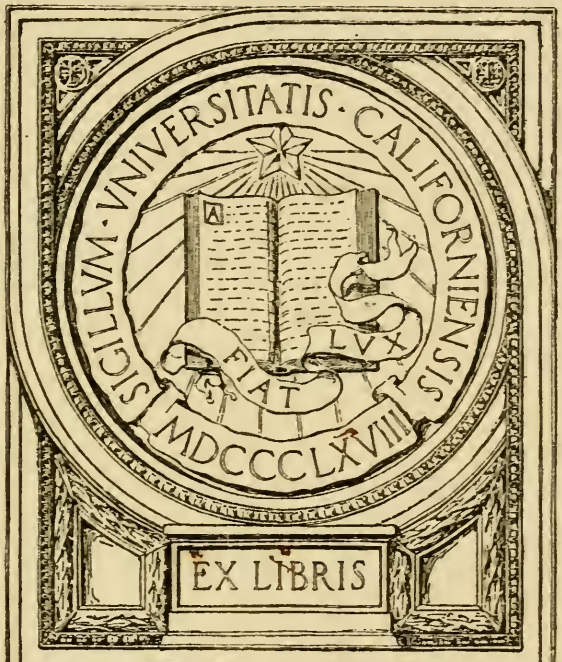

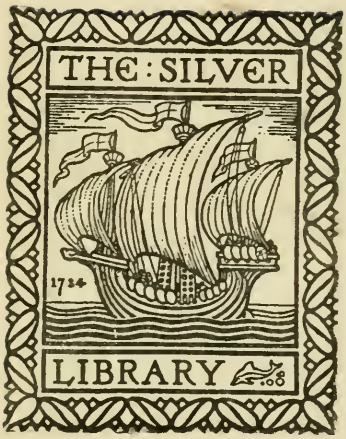
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LIEUT.-GENERAL BARON DE MARBOT.

THE MEMOIRS

OF

BARON DE MARBOT

LATE
LIEUTENANT-GENERAL IN THE FRENCH ARMY

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

ARTHUR JOHN BUTLER

LATE FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

WITH PORTRAIT

NEW IMPRESSION

IN TWO VOLUMES. VOL. I.

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THIS English version of what is in some respects the most interesting book that has appeared in France—or for that matter in either country—for a generation must be taken for what it is, namely, an attempt to convey some of the interest of this work to English readers who do not read French fluently. Owing to circumstances not necessary to specify here, the work was entrusted to a translator whose principal qualifications were a fair knowledge of French, and just enough acquaintance with French military terms to be aware that *brigadier* does not mean a brigadier, nor *maréchal de camp* a field-marshal. Further, the different conditions of the book-market in England and France made it impossible to render the 1,200 and odd pages of the original in their entirety; and consequently the whole work, except the most exciting episodes, has had to be somewhat condensed, and several passages reduced to little more than abstracts. These last are indicated by brackets. The book has been less injured than some would be by this treatment—for 'style' was not General Marbot's forte. He tells his stories (and excellent stories they are) quite intelligibly, and with the most engaging good faith, but with a decided excess of relative clauses. On the other hand, it has been thought expedient to preserve, as far as possible, the colloquial turns of phrase which abound, and give the recital much of its freshness. Whether it be that a good deal of the book was composed by the process of copying notes made at the moment, or that the author, as he wrote, identified himself with his

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former self to the point of adapting his diction to the period of his life which he happened to be recording, it is certainly noticeable that these colloquialisms are much less frequent in the latter portions of the book. In fact, from the beginning of the Russian campaign and his own promotion to the command of a regiment, a curious accession of seriousness is to be remarked, and at last a tone of positive bitterness when the enemies of France are mentioned. No doubt the recollection of that time was enough to inspire seriousness, and even occasional bitterness, in the tone of any Frenchman who had taken part in its events.

On the whole, the author's fairness is very conspicuous. Though attached to Napoleon, he is by no means a blind partisan, and when he thinks the Emperor in the wrong, does not scruple to say so. When, as in the case of Napoleon's conduct towards Prince Hatzfeld, or his treatment of Hofer, we miss any expression of the reprobation with which most honest men regard those deeds, it is clearly because General Marbot only knew the versions current in France. He was not writing history, still less criticism; nor does he, as a rule, lay any claim to special knowledge in regard to matters which did not fall under his personal observation. For this reason it has been thought worth while to depart from the course usually and rightly followed in the case of translations, and to append an occasional note to statements which seem at variance with the facts as established after investigation of evidence by professed historians (and that even in cases where Marbot's evidence ought probably to be accepted), most of all in those portions of the story which are especially likely to interest English readers. That these notes may now and then have been prompted by a feeling akin to that which made Dr. Johnson object to 'letting the Whig dogs

have the best of it' the translator is not concerned to deny. If so, it is a tribute to the interest of the book. It should here be mentioned that the notes due to the translator are distinguished by brackets. Where names have been suppressed by the French editors it has been felt that any attempt to supply them would hardly be in good taste.

As to the question which has been raised in some quarters with regard to the genuineness of the Memoirs, it will suffice to say that there are persons of the highest authority who were acquainted with General Marbot, saw the Memoirs in MS. during his lifetime, and vouch for the virtual identity of the book as now published with what they then saw. Its genuineness once established, it is hardly possible to doubt that it is a faithful record. There is sincerity in every line of it. With an utter absence of anything like swagger, there is no pretence of self-depreciation. Whether in his younger days Marbot performs some daring feat of arms, or in a more responsible position saves his regiment by his own good management from some of the worst miseries of the Russian retreat, he knows that what he did is creditable to him, and does not mind, in a modest way, taking credit for it. When his services are recognised, his delight is childlike; '*C'était un des plus beaux jours de ma vie*' is almost a refrain, at least in the first half of the book; when the promised reward is delayed, he makes no affectation of indifference. The boyish countenance which he seems to have borne, even at thirty years old, is the outward sign of a boyish temperament, using the word in its best sense and in no way so as to detract from the type of an almost ideal soldier such as the book presents to us, the soldier who—

> Through the heat of conflict keeps the law
> In calmness made, and sees what he foresaw;

Or if an unexpected call succeed,
Come when it will, is equal to the need.

. . . . . .

Is yet a soul whose master-bias leans
To homefelt pleasures and to gentle scenes.

But the book needs no introduction to English readers. Since its appearance in France many notices of it have appeared in our reviews and magazines, from the pens of approved men of letters, and must have made many, even of those who do not read French with ease, desirous of its further acquaintance. To some at least of these it is hoped that the present version may be of service.

NOTE TO FIFTH EDITION.

I AM indebted to Mr. Archibald Forbes for several suggestions and corrections which have been embodied in this edition.

THE MEMOIRS OF THE BARON DE MARBOT

CHAPTER I.

I WAS born August 18, 1782, at my father's château of Larivière, in the vale of Beaulieu, on the borders of the Limousin and Quercy, now in the Department of Corrèze. My father was an only son, as were his father and grandfather before him. His income from land consequently amounted to what was, for our province, a considerable sum. Our family was of noble origin, although it had for a long time dropped any title; but our mode of living was what was called 'noble'—that is, we lived on our own income, without adding to it by any profession or trade. The house was connected by marriage with many of the good families of the neighbourhood, and on terms of friendship with others—a point worth remarking, as showing the respect in which it was held at a period when the old nobility was in its full pride and power.

My father was born in 1753. He had received an excellent education and was a thoroughly cultivated man, loving study, literature, and art. Naturally hot-tempered, he had acquired self-control from the ways of the society in which he lived; and, being extremely kind-hearted, he would always do his best to efface the impression of any hasty word which in the first impulse of anger might have escaped him. He was a splendid man—very tall and strongly built; of dark complexion, with severe but handsome and regular features. His mother died when he was a lad; my grandfather was old and infirm, and nearly blind from the effects of a flash of lightning, and the management of the household was left to an elderly cousin, Mlle. Oudinet de Beaulieu. Thus my father on his first entry into active life found himself practically his own

master. The only use, however, which he made of his liberty was to accept the offer made to him by his neighbour and friend, Colonel the Marquis d'Estresse, of a sub-lieutenant's commission in the body-guard of Louis XV. From this he passed in 1781 to General Count de Schomberg's regiment of dragoons with the rank of captain, and in the following year became aide-de-camp to the general.

Some years before this my grandfather had died, and my father, in 1776, had married the daughter of M. de Certain, a gentleman of small means but old family living within a few miles of our home at the château of Laval de Cère. Mme. de Certain belonged to the family of Verdal, which claims kindred with St. Roch[1]—a Verdal having, it is said, married a sister of the saint at Montpellier. I cannot vouch for the truth of the story, but I know that before the Revolution there existed at the château of Gouveau, still in the possession of the Verdal family, a stone bench, held in great veneration by the mountain-folk of the country, because St. Roch, when visiting his sister, was fond of sitting on it. It commands a better view of the country than can be had from the château, one of the most gloomy of fortresses.

M. and Mme. de Certain had three sons and a daughter. Each of these, according to the old custom, bore the title of one of the family estates. Thus the eldest son, who was at this time a captain in the Penthièvre regiment of foot, had the surname of Canrobert, which his son, my cousin, has since rendered illustrious; the second son, lieutenant in the same regiment, was called De l'Isle; the third, a comrade of my father's in the body-guard, La Coste. The daughter, my mother, was known as Mlle. du Puy.

At that time the public coaches were few, dirty, and uncomfortable, and no man of fashion would ever travel in one. Elderly persons and invalids travelled in post-chaises, young gentlemen and officers in the saddle. Among the body-guard a custom which to us seems quaint enough had sprung up. Each was only on duty for three months in every year, and they were thus divided into four groups: those whose homes were in districts possessing a good breed of horses—such as Brittany, Auvergne, the Limousin—were expected to buy them, at prices not exceeding 100 francs, saddle and bridle

[1] [St. Roch (1295-1327), the patron-saint of the plague-stricken, was son of Jean de a Croix, a distinguished citizen of Montpellier, and, through his grandmother, great-grandson of Charles of Anjou.]

included. When the day for returning to duty arrived, all those belonging to the same province met at some appointed rendezvous and rode, a merry caravan, to Versailles, stopping at regular stations, where good quarters and a good supper at a moderate price, agreed on beforehand, were ready for them. As they rode along, laughing, singing, chatting, telling stories (of which each was bound to produce a supply when his turn came), their numbers were constantly swelled by the arrival of comrades from the districts they traversed. Finally, they got to Versailles as another detachment was ready to start on its leave. The outgoing party bought the nags of the incomers at the established price of 100 francs, rode them to the paternal mansion, and then turned them out to grass for nine months. On their return to duty they disposed of them as they had acquired them; and in this way the horses with one master after another went about to every province of France.

In these journeys and during their turn of duty my father became very intimate with M. Certain de la Coste, and, through him, with the rest of the family, and ultimately married Mlle. du Puy. They had four children—all sons. The eldest, Adolphe, is now major-general; I was the second; Theodore, the third; Felix, the youngest. We were born at intervals of about two years.]

I was of strong constitution, and never had an illness save the small-pox; but my life was nearly cut short by an accident which happened when I was three years old. By reason of my snub nose and round face my father called me 'the kitten.' That was quite inducement enough to set me imitating a kitten, and I used to delight in going about on all-fours mewing. Every day I used to go upstairs in this way to the second floor, to be with my father in his library, where he used to pass the hottest part of the day. When he heard his 'kitten' mew he would open the door and give me a volume of Buffon, that I might look at the pictures while he was reading. This I thought excellent fun; but one day I was not received with the usual welcome. My father, probably intent on more serious matters, did not open to his 'kitten.' Vainly I mewed more and more, in my most insinuating tones; the door remained closed. Then I noticed, on a level with the floor, a hole, which in all the country-houses in the South of France is made at the bottom of the door to allow the cat to get into the rooms, known as the 'cat-hole.' This was obviously my way, and I gently slipped my head through.

But my body would not follow, nor could I draw my head back: it was caught. Though I was beginning to be strangled, I had so completely identified myself with my part of kitten, that, instead of speaking to let my father know of my unpleasant situation, I *mewed* with all my might, like a cat undergoing strangulation. It seems I did it so well that my father, thinking it part of the joke, was seized with a fit of helpless laughter. Suddenly, however, the mewing grew faint; my face turned blue; I swooned away. I imagine my father's alarm when he perceived the truth. With some difficulty he lifted the door from its hinges, released me, and carried me, still unconscious, to my mother. She, thinking me dead, was seized with hysterics. When I came to, a doctor was in the act of bleeding me. The sight of my own blood, and the anxiety of the whole household crowding round my mother and myself, made so vivid an impression on my childish imagination that the whole affair has remained deeply graven on my memory.

While my childhood was passing peacefully great events were preparing. The storm of revolution was already grumbling, and it was not long before it burst; 1789 had come. The first effect which the assembling of the States-General produced upon provincial tranquillity was discord in nearly every family. Ours did not escape: for my father, who had long been accustomed to censure the abuses under which France laboured, acquiesced in principle in the proposed reforms, without any notion of the atrocities which would follow in the train of the changes. His three brothers-in-law, on the other hand, and his friends rejected all alterations of the established state of things. Hence arose debates, of which I understood nothing, but was none the less distressed at seeing my mother endeavouring with tears to keep the peace between brothers and husband. Meanwhile, without knowing why, I was on the side of the moderate democrats, who had chosen my father, as unquestionably the ablest man of the neighbourhood, for their leader.

The Constituent Assembly abolished feudal quit-rents.[1] My father, as a man of noble family, possessed sundry such, which his father had bought, and was the first to accept the

[1] [*Rentes féodales*, rent originally paid in lieu of military service by tenants qualified for such service, as opposed to rent paid by *roturiers*, for whom, as Hallam observes, there appears to be no English equivalent.]

law. The peasants, waiting to follow his lead, as soon as they found that he ceased to collect his rents, ceased to pay theirs. Then came the division of France into departments. My father was appointed administrator of Corrèze, and, soon after, member of the Legislative Assembly.

My three uncles and nearly all the nobility of the district had gone abroad at once; and war seemed imminent. With the view of inducing all citizens to arm, and perhaps, too, of judging how far it could reckon on the energy of the people at large, the Government spread a report simultaneously in every parish that brigands under the leadership of the *émigrés* were coming to put down the new constitutions. The tocsin was rung in every church. Each man took up what arms he could; the national guards were organised, and the country with a warlike air awaited the alleged brigands, who were generally said to be in the next parish. None appeared, but the effect was produced; France had found herself in arms, and had shown that she was ready to defend herself. We were in the country alone with my mother, when this alarm, known as the Day of Fear, occurred. I was surprised, and should no doubt have been frightened had I not seen my mother pretty calm. I have always believed that my father, knowing her discretion, had given her a hint of what was to happen.

At the beginning there were no excesses on the part of the peasantry. They had always in our district preserved a great respect for the old families. But when the town demagogues got at them attacks began on the houses of the gentry, nominally to search for concealed *émigrés*, really for plunder. My mother's anxiety was heightened when her mother arrived, driven from her own house, which on the flight of her sons had been declared national property. Even my father's known patriotism, and the fact that he was then serving in the Army of the Pyrenees as captain of chasseurs, was insufficient to prevent the confiscation of a house which he had bought ten years ago at Saint-Céré. It was declared national property on the ground that it had passed by private contract, and that the vendor had left the country without ratifying the sale before a notary. It was sold by auction, and bought by the president of the district, at whose instance the proceedings had taken place. Finally, our own house was visited. They behaved politely to my mother, but said that they must burn the title-deeds of the feudal rents, and ascertain that her brothers were not concealed about the place. My mother gave

them the deeds, and pointed out that her brothers, being, as they were aware, no fools, were not likely to have gone abroad in order to come back to France and hide in her house. They admitted the force of the argument, had a meal, burnt the deeds in the middle of the courtyard, and retired without doing any damage, shouting: 'Hurrah for the nation and citizen Marbot!' bidding my mother write and tell him that they loved him much, and that his family was quite safe with them.

Before long, however, my mother, not feeling sure that her position as sister to three *émigrés* was sufficiently balanced by that of wife to one of the country's defenders to ensure her against inconvenience, decided to leave home for a time. Like many others, as she has since told me, she was convinced that a few months would see the end of the disturbances. She determined to go to Rennes. One of her uncles, who had formerly served in the Penthièvre regiment of foot, had on leaving the service married the widow of a member of the parliament of that city. With her my mother proposed to stay, taking me with her; but at the moment of starting I was attacked with painful boils, which made me too ill to travel so far. I was therefore left in charge of a friend—Mlle. Mongalvi, the mistress of a small girl's school at Turenne, where my mother had been one of the first pupils. 'A boy in a girls' school?' you say. Well, yes; but you must observe that I was a very quiet and obedient child, and only eight years old. The young ladies, who were mostly between sixteen and twenty, petted me to their hearts' content; and my only regret was that my stay among them would, as I imagined, be but of short duration. As it turned out, I remained there for four years.

My mother reached her uncle's house at Rennes with the intention of staying two or three months. Public events followed with rapidity. The Terror bathed France in blood, and civil war broke out in Brittany and Vendée. Travelling in those parts became impossible. My father was still with the army in the Pyrenees and in Spain, having been promoted to the rank of general of division. The end of it was that my mother remained at Rennes for several years also.

Long afterwards, when I read how 'Vert-Vert' lived among the Visitandines of Nevers, I said, 'That is myself in the ladies' school at Turenne.' Like the parrot, I was spoilt by mistresses and scholars as much as any child could be. I had only to wish in order to get; nothing was good enough for me. I became perfectly healthy; my complexion was

clear and fresh; and the young ladies contended for the privilege of kissing me and tending me. When we played prisoner's base I was allowed always to catch, never to be caught; they read me stories, they sang to me. One reminiscence connected with this time is that when the news of the king's execution arrived Mlle. Mongalvi caused the whole school to kneel and say prayers for the repose of his soul. An indiscretion on the part of any one of them might have brought her into serious trouble. But the pupils were old enough to understand the state of affairs, and I perceived that the matter should not be talked about; so it was never known beyond the house.

CHAPTER II.

I REMAINED in my pleasant quarters till November 1793, when my father, who was in command of a camp which had been formed at Toulouse, took the opportunity of a few days' leave to come and see me at Turenne. His appearance in the uniform of a general officer with sword and enormous moustache, hair short and unpowdered, was a strange contrast to my recollection of him in the peaceful days at Larivière. As I have said, though stern in countenance he was exceedingly kind, especially to children; so we met with the keenest delight on my part, and abundance of caresses on his. His gratitude was great to the kind ladies who had taken really maternal care of me; but, as I was now in my twelfth year, he naturally decided that the time had come for a more masculine education. He found on examining me that, while I was well up in prayers and hymns, my knowledge of history, geography, even spelling, was limited. So it was decided that I should go with him to Toulouse, where my brother Adolphe was already, and that we should both be placed at the military college of Sorèze, the only large establishment of the kind which the Revolution had spared.

At Cressensac we found Captain Gault, my father's aide-de-camp. While we were halting here I saw a sight that I had never seen before. A marching column of gendarmes, national guards, and volunteers entered the little town, their band playing. I thought it grand, but could not understand why they should have in the middle of them a dozen carriages full of old gentlemen, ladies, and children, all looking very sad. My father was furious at the sight. He drew back from the window, and as he strode up and down the room with his aide-de-camp I heard him exclaim: 'Those scoundrels of the Convention have spoilt the Revolution, which might have been so splendid! There is another batch of innocent people being taken off to prison because they are of good family, or have relations who have gone abroad! It is terrible!' I understood him perfectly, and, like him, I vowed hatred to the party of terror who spoilt the Revolution of 1789. I may be asked,

Why, then, did my father continue to serve a Government for which he had no esteem? Because he held that to repel the enemy from French territory was under all circumstances honourable, and in no way pledged a soldier to approval of the atrocities committed by the Convention in its internal administration.

What my father had said awakened my lively interest in the persons whom the carriages contained. I found out that they were noble families who had been that morning arrested in their houses and were being carried to prison at Souilhac. I was wondering how these old men, women, and children could be dangerous to the country when I heard one of the children ask for food. A lady begged a national guard to let her get out to buy provisions; he refused harshly; the lady then held out an *assignat*, and asked him to be so kind as to get her a loaf; to which he replied: 'Do you think I am one of your old lackeys?' His brutality disgusted me; and having noticed that our servant Spire had placed in the pockets of the carriage sundry rolls, each lined with a sausage, I took two of them, and approaching the carriage where the children were, I threw these in when the guard's back was turned. Mother and children made such expressive signs of gratitude that I decided to victual all the prisoners, and accordingly took them all the stores that Spire had packed for the nourishment of four persons during the forty-eight hours which it would take us to reach Toulouse. We started without any suspicion on his part of the way in which I had disposed of them. The children kissed their hands to me, the parents bowed, and we set off. We had not gone a hundred yards when my father, who in his haste to escape from a sight which distressed him had not taken a meal at the inn, felt hungry and asked for the provisions. Spire mentioned the pockets in which he had placed them. My father and M. Gault rummaged the whole carriage and found nothing. My father pitched into Spire; Spire from the coach-box swore by all the fiends that he had victualled the carriage for two days. I was rather in a quandary; however, not liking to let poor Spire be scolded any more, I confessed what I had done, fully expecting a slight reproof for having acted on my own authority. But my father only kissed me, and long afterwards he used to delight to speak of my conduct on that occasion. This is why, my children, I thought I might relate it to you. There is always happiness in the recollection of praise earned from those whom we have loved and lost.

From Cressensac to Toulouse the road swarmed with

volunteers going gaily to join the Army of the Pyrenees, and the air rang with their patriotic songs. The bustle delighted me, and I should have been happy but for a physical discomfort. I had never made a long journey in a carriage, and during this one I suffered from *sea-sickness*. My father stopped at night to let me rest; but I was very tired when we got to Toulouse. However, the meeting with my brother, whom I had not seen for four or five years, was a great joy and soon set me up again.

My father, as general commanding the camp (which was at Le Miral, near Toulouse), had a right to quarters, and the town council had assigned him the Hôtel Rességuier, a fine house, of which the owner had gone abroad. Mme. Rességuier and her son occupied a retired part of the house, and my father ordered that they should be treated with all respect. He entertained largely—indeed, to an extent which his general's allowance of eighteen rations per diem was insufficient to meet. His pay, except for the sum of eight francs a month, which all officers, of whatever rank, received in cash, was paid in *assignats*, the value of which decreased daily; and he was compelled to draw upon the savings of former years. From the date of his return to active service his fortune was seriously diminished. Though the spirit of subordination and good manners generally were just then at a low ebb in France, his influence was such that a tone of perfect courtesy was always maintained in his drawing-room and at his table alike.

Among the officers serving in the camp, two were especial favourites with my father, and received invitations more often than any. One, Augereau by name, was adjutant-general, that is, a colonel on the staff; the other, Lannes, a lieutenant of grenadiers in a volunteer battalion from the Gers. Both became marshals of the Empire, and I was aide-de-camp to both. You will hear more of them later on.

At this time Augereau had just come from service in Vendée, after previously escaping from the prisons of the Inquisition at Lisbon. He had been noticed for his courage and the ease with which he handled his troops. He was a good tactician, having learnt the science in Prussia, where he had long served in the foot-guards of Frederick the Great; whence his nickname of 'le grand Prussien.' He was always dressed irreproachably, in perfect trim; hair curled and powdered, long *queue*, his long riding-boots highly polished, and withal a most martial bearing; all the more conspicuous that at that time a brilliant get-up

was not common in the French army. The volunteers of which it was mainly composed had not been accustomed to wear uniform, and were careless as to their toilet. Still no one ventured to rally Augereau on this score; he was well known to be handy with his 'tool,' and of undoubted courage. He had made the celebrated Saint-George, the stoutest swordsman in France, lower his colours. His reputation as a tactician caused my father to entrust to him the training of the newly-raised battalions of which the division mostly consisted, coming chiefly from the central and south-western provinces. Augereau got them into excellent shape, little thinking that in so doing he was laying the foundations of his future renown; for the troops which my father then commanded formed in after times the celebrated 'Augereau's division' which did so splendidly in the Eastern Pyrenees and in Italy. He came almost daily to see my father, and, finding himself valued, vowed for him a friendship which was always true to itself, and of which I felt the good effects after my mother's death.

Lieutenant Lannes was the most lively of young Gascons; witty, merry, devoid of learning or education, but desirous to learn, at a time when such a desire was rare. He became a very good instructor, and, having plenty of self-esteem, he received with inexpressible delight the praises which my father deservedly lavished on him. Out of gratitude, moreover, he spoilt his general's children to the best of his ability.

One fine morning my father received orders to strike his camp at Le Miral and march with his division to join the force under General Dugommier, then besieging Toulon, which the English had captured by a surprise.[1] He then pointed out to me that I needed to study more seriously than had been possible in a girls' school, and that the next day he should take me to the college of Sorèze, where he had already entered my brother and myself. I was quite taken aback. I could hardly believe that I was not to go back to my girl friends and Mlle. Mongalvi. Nor could the sight of the troops and guns which my father reviewed at Castelnaudary comfort me. My mind was full of the professors among whom I was going to be thrown. That night my father heard that the English had evacuated Toulon[2]

[1] [August 27, 1793. As a matter of history, the surrender of Toulon seems to have been due to the fact that much disaffection to the Republican Government existed in the town and fleet.]

[2] [Taking the French fleet, or most of it, with them. For a full account of the proceedings at Toulon, see James's *Naval History of Great Britain*, vol. i. pp. 91, *sqq*. It was at this recapture of Toulon that Napoleon Bonaparte, then an artillery officer, first distinguished himself.]

(December 18, 1793), and that he was ordered to the Eastern Pyrenees. He decided, therefore, to leave us at Sorèze the next day and go on to Perpignan.

As we left Castelnaudary my father stopped his carriage by the famous toll under which the Constable Montmorency was made prisoner by the troops of Louis XIII. after the defeat of the supporters of the revolted Gaston d'Orléans. He talked about the story with his aide-de-camp, and my brother, who was already well educated, joined in the conversation. My notions on French history generally were very dim, and I knew nothing of the details. I had never heard of the battle of Castelnaudary, of Gaston or his revolt, or of the capture and execution of the Constable Montmorency; and I was much ashamed to see that my father, knowing that I could not have answered, put no questions to me on the subject. I privately concluded, therefore, that he was quite right to send me to the college, and my regrets were transformed into a resolution to learn all that I ought to know. Still my heart sank when I saw the high gloomy walls of the cloister in which I was to be shut up. I was now eleven years and four months old.

CHAPTER III.

The College of Sorèze dated from the time of the expulsion of the Jesuits in the reign of Louis XV. Their supporters maintained that they alone knew how to educate; their rivals, the Benedictines, resolved to show that they could do it as well. To this end they converted four of their houses into colleges, Sorèze being one. The place flourished; lay teachers were engaged, and settled with their families in the town; girls' schools were started, to profit by the available teaching-power; and many foreigners, English, Spanish, American, took up their abode there for the period of their children's education. The little town became remarkable for the high standard of instruction and cultivation to be found among all classes.

The Benedictines went much into society, and were extremely popular. Consequently, when the Revolution broke out, and the property of religious houses was sold, the neighbours urged the principal, Dom Ferlus, to buy in the convent and annexed domain. Instead of bidding against him, they lent him the purchase money (which he repaid in timber), and the local authorities permitted payment to be spread over a long time. The former principal, Dom Despaulx, retired, having had conscientious scruples about taking the civic oath;[1] but Dom Ferlus and the other brethren accepted the position, and under their management the college continued to prosper. They had no money; but their estates provided all necessaries, and the teachers' salaries were paid in kind. Later, on the death of Dom Ferlus, the college passed into the hands of his brother, an Oratorian who had renounced his orders and married. He was a man of far inferior capacity; and under him and his son-in-law, an ex-officer of artillery, who succeeded him, it lost its importance. The hostility of the Jesuits, who returned in 1814, also aided its downfall.

When I entered, however, it was at the height of its success

[1] [The oath of fidelity to the Constitution, including the civil constitution of the Church, which the clergy were ordered, by a decree of the National Assembly in January 1791, to take on pain of deprivation.]

under Dom Ferlus. The monks wore lay clothes, and were addressed as 'citizen'; but otherwise no change of any importance had taken place in the routine of the school. Of course it could not but show some traces of the feverish agitation which prevailed outside. The walls were covered with Republican 'texts.' We were forbidden to use the term 'monsieur.' When we went to the refectory, or for a walk, we sang *Marseillaise*, or other Republican hymns. The exploits of our armies formed the chief subject of conversation; and some of the elder boys enrolled themselves among the volunteers. We learnt drill, riding, fortification, &c. This military atmosphere tended to make the manners of the pupils somewhat free-and-easy; and as for their outward person, thick boots, only cleaned on *décadis*, grey socks, brown coat and trousers, shirts tattered and inkstained, no necktie or cap, untidy hair, hands worthy of a charcoal-burner, gave them a rough appearance enough.

Now imagine me clean, well brushed, in a good cloth suit, shot into the middle of seven hundred young imps dressed in this fashion. One of them shouted, 'Here are some new boys!' and in a swarm they left their games and came and crowded round us, looking at us as if we had been some strange beasts. My father kissed us and departed. I was in utter despair. There I was, for the first time in my life, all alone, for my brother was in the large quadrangle, and I in the small. It was the depth of winter, and exceedingly cold; the rules of the school forbad the pupils to have any fire. On the other hand, they were well fed; for while France was being laid waste by famine, the good arrangement of Dom Ferlus insured plenty in the college. The fare was certainly all that could be desired for schoolboys. In spite of this it seemed to me a most wretched supper, and the sight of the dishes which were on the table before me disgusted me; they might have offered me ortolans and I should have refused them, my heart was so full. The meal ended as it had begun, with a patriotic song. At the verse of the *Marseillaise* which begins with the words 'Amour sacré de la patrie' all knelt. Then we marched out as we had come in, to the drum, and so to bed.

Those who were in the large quadrangle had each a room to himself, and were locked in at night; those in the smaller slept four in a room. I was put with Guirand, Romestan, and Lagarde. They were almost as new comers as I, and we sat together at meals. I was glad to be with them, for they seemed, and really were, good fellows. I was horrified, however, to see how narrow my bed was, and how thin the

mattress, and, above all, disgusted at finding the bedstead was of iron. I had never seen such before. Still it was all very clean, and, in spite of my troubles, I slept soundly, being thoroughly tired by the new sensations of this critical day of my life.

Next morning the drum beat very early, and its horrible roll in the dormitories seemed to me terribly barbarous. Think of my feelings when I discovered that while I was asleep they had taken away my nice clothes, my fine stockings, and my pretty shoes, and replaced them by the coarse garments and the clumsy foot-gear of the school! I cried with rage.

Now that I have told you my first impressions on entering the college, I will spare you the history of my troubles for the next six months. I had been so much petted at the ladies' school that I was bound to suffer both mentally and physically in my new surroundings. I became very melancholy, and if my constitution had been less strong I should certainly have fallen ill. It was one of the saddest periods of my life. Gradually, however, as I got used to the work, my spirits improved; I was very fond of my lessons in French literature, in geography, and, most of all, in history, and I got on well with them. I became fairly good in mathematics, in Latin, in riding, and in fencing; I learnt my musketry exercise thoroughly; and I took much delight in drilling with the school battalion, commanded by an old retired captain.

As I have said, when I entered the college at the end of 1793, the sanguinary rule of the Convention was at its heaviest. Commissioners were travelling through the provinces, and nearly all those who had any influence in the South came to visit the establishment of Sorèze. Citizen Ferlus had a knack of his own for persuading them that it was their duty to support an institution which was training, in great numbers, young people who were the hope of the country. Thus he got all that he wanted out of them. Very often they allowed him to have large quantities of fagots which were destined for the supply of the armies, on the plea that we formed part of the army, and were its nursery.

When these representatives arrived they were received like sovereigns: the pupils put on their military uniforms, the battalion was drilled in their presence; sentries were placed at every door, as in a garrison town; we acted pieces inspired by the purest patriotism; we sang national hymns. When they inspected the classes, especially the history classes, an opportunity was always found to introduce some dissertation on the

excellence of Republican government, and the patriotic virtues which result from it. I remember in this connection that the deputy Chabot, who had been a Capuchin, was questioning me one day on Roman history. He asked me what I thought of Coriolanus, who, when his fellow-citizens, forgetful of his old services, had offended him, took refuge with the Volsci, the Roman's sworn enemies. Dom Ferlus and the masters were in terror lest I should approve the Roman's conduct; but I said that a good citizen should never bear arms against his country, nor dream of revenging himself on her, however just grounds he might have for discontent. The representative was so pleased with my answer that he embraced me, and complimented the head of the college and his assistants on the good principles which they instilled into their pupils.

This little success in no way diminished my hatred for the Convention. Young as I was, I had sense enough to understand that in order to save the country it was not necessary to bathe in the blood of Frenchmen, and that the guillotinings and massacres were odious crimes. There is no need here to speak of the oppression under which our unhappy country then suffered; you have read it in history. But no colours that history can employ to depict the horrors of which the Terrorists were guilty can bring the picture up to the reality. What was most surprising was the stupidity of the masses in allowing themselves to be led by men of whom very few had any capacity; for nearly all the members of the Convention were below the average in ability. Even their boasted courage was due mainly to their fear of each other, since it was through dread of being guillotined that they acquiesced in the wishes of their leaders. During my exile in 1815 I came across numbers of *conventionnels* who had been compelled to leave France as I had. They were utterly devoid of steady principles, and they admitted to me that they only voted for the execution of Louis XVI. and a heap of hateful decrees in order to save their own heads. The recollections of this period made such an impression on me that I detest anything which might tend to re-establish democracy, so convinced I am that the masses are blind, and that no government is so bad as the government of the people.

CHAPTER IV.

I REMAINED at Sorèze till February 1799; I was then sixteen and a half years old. A friend of my father's, M. Dorignac, brought me to Paris, where we arrived on the night when the Odéon Theatre was burnt down for the first time. The blaze was to be seen reflected in the sky from a great distance on the Orleans road, and I quite believed that it was the natural glare of the street lamps of the capital. My family were living in the Rue de Faubourg Saint-Honoré, where I joined them the next morning. I have seldom had a happier day.

In the spring of 1799 the Republic was still in existence, the Government consisting of an executive Directory of five members, and two Chambers called 'Conseil des Anciens' and 'Conseil des Cinq Cents.' My father was intimate with many conspicuous people; I met at his house such men as Bernadotte, Joseph and Lucien Bonaparte, Napper Tandy (the leader of the Irish refugees), General Joubert, Cambacérès. In my mother's company I often saw Madame Bonaparte, Madame de Condorcet, and occasionally Madame de Staël.

A month after I came to Paris a general election took place. My father, tired of the incessant worries of political life, and not liking to be debarred from a share in the great deeds of our armies, declined to stand again, and expressed his wish to re-enter active service. The course of events suited his purpose well. With the new Chambers came a change of Ministry. Bernadotte became War Minister, and promised my father a post with the Army of the Rhine. As he was about to start for Mainz, the news came of the defeat of the Army of Italy under General Scherer; and Joubert, then in command of the 17th division at Paris, was sent by the Directory to replace him. The vacant command, one of political importance, and requiring a capable and strong man, was offered to my father. As his chief reason for resigning his seat in the Chamber had been his desire for active service, he at first declined; but on Bernadotte showing him his appointment already signed, with the remark that as a friend he begged him, and as a Minister ordered him,

to accept it, my father yielded. On the following day he established himself at the head-quarters of the Paris division. The house has now been pulled down, and several houses stand on its site. It was on the Quai Voltaire, at the corner of the Rue des Saints-Pères.

My father had appointed as chief of the staff his old friend Colonel Ménard. I was delighted with all the military bustle which surrounded him: the head-quarters always full of officers of all ranks; a squadron of cavalry, a battalion of infantry, and six guns permanently stationed in front of the door; orderlies coming and going. I thought it much more amusing than the themes and versions of Sorèze.

At that time there was much excitement in France, and particularly in Paris: we were on the eve of a catastrophe. The Russians, under the celebrated Souvaroff, had entered Italy, and had severely defeated our army at Novi. Joubert, the commander-in-chief, had been killed; Souvaroff was marching on our Army of Switzerland, where Masséna was in command. We had few troops on the Rhine. The peace conference which had been begun at Rastadt had been dissolved and our plenipotentiaries assassinated.[1] The whole of Germany was arming anew against us; the Directory had fallen into discredit, and, having neither troops nor money to levy them, in order to procure funds, had just decreed a forced loan, which had completed the measure of its unpopularity. Our last hopes were in Masséna; he alone could stop the Russians and prevent the invasion of France. The Directory sent despatch after despatch ordering him to give battle; but, like a modern Fabius, not wishing to risk the safety of his country, he waited till some false move on the part of the enemy should offer a chance of beating him.

Here I may relate an anecdote which shows on how small a matter the destiny of a state and the reputation of commanders sometimes turn. The Directory, irritated at seeing that Masséna did not obey their repeated order to give battle, resolved to recall him. They feared, however, that the commander-in-chief would take no notice of their recall, and would simply put the despatch in his pocket, if they forwarded it by an ordinary messenger, and accordingly instructed the War Minister to send to Switzerland a staff officer com-

[1] [The Congress of Rastadt, held in order to settle some details in the Treaty of Campo Formio, sat from November 1797 to January 1799, when it was dissolved by the French plenipotentiaries. These were attacked by Austrian troops as they were returning to France, and two of them killed.]

missioned to hand the order of recall to Masséna in public, and to give to Chérin, his chief of the staff, a commission conferring on him the command of the army. Bernadotte imparted these arrangements in confidence to my father, who expressed disapproval of them, explaining how dangerous it was, on the eve of a decisive affair, to deprive the Army of Switzerland of a general in whom it had confidence, in order to replace him by one who had more experience in secretary's work than in manœuvring troops. Besides this the position of the armies might change. It would therefore be necessary to entrust with this mission a man capable of judging the state of affairs, and who was not likely to hand the order of recall to Masséna immediately before or during a battle. He persuaded the Minister to entrust the duty to M. Gault, his aide-de-camp, who should go to Switzerland under the ostensible pretext of ascertaining if the contractors had delivered the stipulated number of horses, and should be authorised to withhold or to hand over the order of recall to Masséna and the commission to General Chérin according as he should see fit under the circumstances. It was a good deal to confide to the judgment of a mere captain; but M. Gault did not disappoint the good opinion formed of him. He reached the head-quarters of the army five days before the battle of Zurich, and found the troops so full of confidence in Masséna, and Masséna himself so calm and so firm, that he felt no doubt of his success. He maintained, therefore, the most profound silence with regard to his secret powers, and after being present at the battle of Zurich he returned to Paris without any suspicion on Masséna's part that this modest captain had had in his hands the power of depriving him of the glory of winning one of the finest victories of the age.

The ill-judged recall of Masséna would probably have involved the defeat of General Chérin, the invasion of France by the Russians, and by the Germans after them, and ultimately, perhaps, a European overturn. Chérin was killed in the battle without ever suspecting the intentions of the Government with regard to himself. The victory of Zurich, while preventing an invasion, gave the Directory only a momentary credit. The Government was breaking down on all sides; no one had any confidence in it. The finances had collapsed, Vendée and Brittany were in complete insurrection, there were no troops in the country, the South was in a blaze, the Chambers were quarrelling with each other and with the Executive—in short, the state was on the brink of ruin.

Every politician was aware that great changes were necessary and inevitable, but opinions differed as to the remedies to be employed. The old Republicans, who stood by the Constitution of the year 3, which was still in force, held that to save the country it was enough to change some members of the Directory. Two of them were accordingly dismissed and replaced by Gohier and Moulins; but this was but a feeble palliative for the calamities under which the country was on the point of sinking, and the anarchical agitations continued. Therefore several of the Directors, among them the celebrated Sieyès, together with many of the Deputies and the vast majority of the public, held that in order to save France the reins of government should be put into the hands of some strong man who had already rendered illustrious services to the state. It was obvious also that such a chief could only be a soldier with a great influence in the army, who should be able to rekindle the enthusiasm of the nation, and so to restore victory to our flag, and to hold off the foreigners who were ready to cross our frontier.

The one man who satisfied these conditions was General Bonaparte; but at this moment he was in Egypt, and the need was pressing. Joubert had just been killed in Italy. Masséna was illustrious for his many victories, an excellent general at the head of an army in the field, but in no sense a statesman. Bernadotte appeared to have neither the talents nor the character required to heal the ills of France. The reformers, therefore, turned their thoughts towards Moreau, though his character was weak and his undecided conduct on the 18th of Fructidor[1] inspired some fear as to his aptitude for governing. It is certain, however, that, failing a better man, it was proposed to him to put himself at the head of the party which wished to overthrow the Directory, and the chief post in the state was offered to him, with the title of President or Consul. Moreau, though a good soldier and brave enough, lacked political courage, and possibly distrusted his own ability to manage affairs so disordered as those of France then were. Being, moreover, selfish and indolent, he cared very little for the future of his country, and preferred the tranquillity of private life to the worry of politics. At any rate, he refused the offer, and retired to his estate of Grosbois to amuse himself with his favourite field sports.

[1] [September 4, 1797, when the Directors Barras, Rewbeu, and La Révellière-Lepeaux, supported by the troops under Augereau, purged the Directory and Council of members—including Carnot, Pichegru, and others —suspected of Royalist tendencies. See below, p. 119.]

[Those who wished to change the form of government had, therefore, no alternative but to seek the co-operation of General Bonaparte. Sieyès, who was the chief mover in the scheme, was President of the Directory; and his calculation was that if he could get Bonaparte into power, the general, while nominally the head of the Government, would confine his attention to military organisation, leaving to himself the real direction of affairs. As the sequel showed, he mistook his man; but this was his thought, when, acting through the Corsican Deputy, Salicetti, he sent a trusty secret agent to Bonaparte to inform him of the unsatisfactory state of affairs, and invite him to return and put himself at the head of the Government. Of his colleagues in the Directory, he found little difficulty in persuading Roger-Ducos that in the circumstances it was to their own interest no less than to that of the public to bring about the formation of a strong Government, in which their places would be less precarious; but the other three, Barras, Gohier, and Moulins, were unwilling to part with their power. Sieyès and those of his party resolved, therefore, to act without them, and to sacrifice them if affairs turned out as they planned.

Even with Bonaparte at hand it would be a difficult and dangerous business to overthrow the Directory without the support of the army, and more especially of the Paris division. Sieyès tried accordingly to win over Bernadotte and my father, first sounding them through the help of various Deputies who were at once their friends and his partisans. Later on I learnt that my father answered the half-advances of the astute Sieyès to the effect that, while he was well aware that the state of the country required prompt remedies, he had sworn to maintain the Constitution of the year 3, and he was not going to use his authority or the troops of his division to bring about the overthrow of that Constitution; after which he waited on Sieyès, resigned his command of the Paris division, and requested to have a division on active service. Sieyès was glad enough to get a man of my father's character out of the way before he could spoil the plot by strict adherence to his duty, and hastened to accede to his request. Bernadotte resigned at the same time, and was replaced by Dubois-Crancé.

There was some little delay before a man could be found to take my father's place; ultimately Sieyès gave the command to General Lefebvre, who was in Paris on leave, having been wounded with the Army of the Rhine. Lefebvre had been a sergeant in the Gardes Françaises; he was a brave soldier, and, as a general, good at executing distinct orders; but he had no

judgment or knowledge of politics, so that a dexterous application of words like 'glory,' 'country,' 'victory,' was sure to make him a willing tool. He was just the man that Sieyès wanted for commandant in Paris; and so sure was he that when the time came Lefebvre would not resist the influence of Bonaparte and his own cajoleries, that he did not even take the trouble to let him know what was expected of him. The 18th of Brumaire showed that he judged right. Lefebvre put his troops at the disposal of Bonaparte when he overthrew the Directory and established the Consulate; and earned thereby, in later days, the high favour of the Emperor, the title of Marshal Duke of Dantzig, and heaps of wealth. I have sketched these events to explain what took my father to Italy: a move which had important results both to him and to me.]

After handing over his command to General Lefebvre my father returned to the house in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, and attended only to the preparations for his departure to Italy.

Very trifling causes often influence human destiny. My father and mother were very intimate with M. Barairon, Registrar-General. One day they were going to breakfast with him, and took me with them. The conversation turned on my father's departure, and on the good conduct of my two younger brothers; finally, M. Barairon inquired, 'What is Marcellin to be?' 'A sailor,' answered my father; 'Captain Sibille has undertaken him, and is going to carry him off to Toulon.' Whereupon good Mme. Barairon (I have always been most grateful to her for it) remarked to my father that the French navy was utterly disorganised, that the finances were in too bad a state to allow of its being quickly reformed, and that, moreover, its inferiority to the English fleet would keep it for some time shut up in the ports. She wondered that he, a general officer of the land forces, should put his son in the navy instead of in a regiment where his father's name and services would be sure to make him welcome. She ended by saying, 'It would be better for you to take him to Italy than send him to be bored to death on board a vessel blockaded in Toulon harbour.' My father had been for the moment captivated by Captain Sibille's proposal, but was too clear-sighted to fail to see the force of Mme. Barairon's arguments. He turned to me saying, 'Well, will you come to Italy with me and serve in the army?' I threw my arms round his neck and accepted with joy. My mother was equally glad, for she had been opposed to my father's first plan.

There was then no 'Ecole militaire,' and the only way to enter the army was in the ranks. My father took me straight to the office of the first *arrondissement* in the Place Beauvau and enlisted me in the 1st Regiment of Hussars (the old 'Bercheny'), which formed part of the division which he was about to command in Italy. This was September 3, 1799. He next took me to the tailor who supplied the Ministry of War with patterns and ordered for me a complete uniform and equipment. So I was actually a hussar; I was beside myself with joy. My joy was, however, alloyed by the thought that it would increase the vexation of my brother Adolphe, who was two years older than I and was still stuck at the college like a child. I decided that I would tell him of my enlistment and at the same moment inform him that I was going to spend in his company the month which would pass before my departure. I therefore begged my father to allow me to settle myself near Adolphe at Sainte-Barbe until the day when we should have to set out for Italy. He understood the motive of my request and approved it. The next day he took me himself. You may imagine my entry into the college! It was recreation time, but all games ceased on the spot, and the pupils, old and young, crowded round me, contending for the honour of touching my accoutrements. The hussar had a complete success. When the day of my departure came I took leave of my mother and my three brothers with grief, tempered though it was by my delight at entering on the career of arms.

CHAPTER V.

Soon after my father had accepted a command in Italy, a vacancy occurred in that of a division of the Army of the Rhine. He would have preferred to be there, but an inevitable destiny drew him towards the country where he was to find a grave. He had a friend from his own province, M. Lachèze—his evil genius, I might say—who had been long Consul at Leghorn and Genoa, and had personal business interests in those parts. This infernal man was always setting before my father the most exaggerated pictures of the beauties of Italy, and pointing out how much was to be gained by restoring victory to an army that had been unfortunate, and how little chance of obtaining glory with the prosperous Army of the Rhine. My poor father let himself be captured by these arguments, thinking that where the danger was greatest most credit was to be gained, and adhered to his purpose of going to Italy. My mother opposed in vain. She had a secret presentiment that it would be better if my father was on the Rhine—a presentiment that was fulfilled, for she never saw him again.

Besides M. Gault, my father took another aide-de-camp, Major R——, who had been passed on to him by his friend General Augereau. This officer, who belonged to a Maintenon family, possessed talents and education of which he made little use; for, by a whim not uncommon at that time, he thought fit to adopt the style of a swashbuckler, for ever swearing, damning, and threatening to split people's heads. This bully had only one good point, and that one which then was rare: he was always most carefully dressed. My father was soon sorry that he had accepted him for his aide-de-camp without knowing him, but he could not dismiss him without offending his old friend Augereau; and, though not liking him, he held that a general ought to make the most of his officers' military qualities without troubling himself too much about their manners. As, however, he did not care to have the company of M. R—— in a long journey, he had given him the duty of bringing his carriages and horses from Paris to Nice. Our old groom Spire,

a faithful servant, accustomed to looking after stablemen, was put under his orders. M. R—— started a month before us in command of a numerous caravan—fifteen horses belonging to my father, besides those of the staff, the baggage wagons, and so on.

In my father's carriage travelled the unlucky M. Lachèze, Captain Gault, and I. Colonel Ménard, chief of the staff, with one of his assistant aides-de-camp, followed in a post-chaise. I had a very smart forage-cap, which I liked to wear always. One night, being troubled with my old enemy 'sea-sickness,' I was constantly putting my head out of the window. My cap fell off; the carriage was going at the best pace of six stout horses. I did not dare to stop it, and my cap was lost. I was much distressed, but did not mention it for fear of the banter which would ensue as to the little care which the new soldier took of his property.

After staying a day at Mâcon with an old friend of my father's we pushed on towards Lyons. When we were changing horses at Limonest, within a few leagues of that town, we noticed that all the post-horses were adorned with tricoloured ribbons and the houses with flags. On asking the cause of this display we were told that Bonaparte had just arrived at Lyons. My father, thinking he knew for certain that Bonaparte was at the other end of Egypt, treated this piece of news as a joke. His astonishment was great when, on questioning the postmaster, who had just come from Lyons, he learnt that that official, who had served under Bonaparte in Italy and knew him well by sight, averred that he had seen him. 'He is at Lyons, in the Hotel ——. His brother Louis, General Berthier, Lannes, and Murat are with him; also many other officers and a mameluke.' This was pretty positive evidence. Still the Revolution had given rise to so many impostures, and so much ingenuity had been shown in inventing stories to serve party purposes, that my father was still in doubt as we entered Lyons by the suburb of Vaise. The houses were all illuminated and beflagged, fireworks were being let off; our carriage could hardly make its way through the crowd. People were dancing in the open spaces, and the air rang with cries of 'Hurrah for Bonaparte! he will save the country!' This evidence was irresistible; we had to admit that Bonaparte was in Lyons. My father said, 'Of course I thought they would bring him, but I never suspected it would be so soon; they have played their game well. We shall see great events come to pass. Now I am sure that I was right in getting away from Paris; with the army I shall be able to

serve my country without being mixed up in a *coup d'état*. It may be as necessary as it seems, but I dislike it altogether.' With that he fell into deep thought, lasting through the tedious interval required to make our way through the crowd, which grew thicker at every step, and reach our hotel.

Arrived there, we found it hung with lanterns and guarded by a battalion of grenadiers. They had given General Bonaparte the apartments ordered a week before for my father. Quick-tempered though he was, he said nothing, and when the landlord made somewhat confused apologies to the effect that he had been compelled to obey the orders of the town council, my father made no answer. On hearing that a lodging had been taken for us in a good hotel of the second class kept by a relation of the landlord's, my father confined himself to bidding M. Gault order the postillions to drive there. When we got there we found our courier—he was an excitable man, and, being well warmed by the numerous quenchers which he had taken at every halting-place on his long journey, had kicked up the devil's own row on learning, when he preceded us at the first hotel, that the apartments engaged for his master had been given to General Bonaparte. The aides-de-camp, hearing this fearful uproar and learning the cause of it, went to let their chief know that General Marbot had been thrown over for him. At the same moment Bonaparte himself, through his open window, perceived my father's two carriages standing before the door. Up to then he had known nothing of his landlord's shabby behaviour towards my father, and, seeing that General Marbot, recently commandant of Paris, and at that moment at the head of a division of the Army of Italy, was too important a man for any offhand treatment, and that, moreover, he himself was returning with the intention of being on a good footing with everybody, he ordered one of his officers to go down at once and offer General Marbot to come and share his lodging with him in soldier fashion. But the carriages went on before the aide-de-camp could speak to my father; so Bonaparte started at once on foot in order to come and express his regret in person. The cheers of the crowd which followed him as he drew near our hotel might have given us notice, but we had heard so much cheering since we entered the town that it occurred to none of us to look out into the street. We were all in the sitting-room, and my father was pacing up and down plunged in meditation, when suddenly a waiter, throwing open both folding-doors, announced General Bonaparte.

On entering, he ran up to my father and embraced him; my father received him courteously but coldly. They were old acquaintances, and between persons of their rank a few words were sufficient to explain matters with regard to the lodging. They had much else to talk of, so they went alone into the bedroom, where they conferred together for more than an hour. Meanwhile the generals and officers who had come with Bonaparte from Egypt chatted with us in the sitting-room. I was never tired of studying their martial air, their faces bronzed by the Eastern sun, their strange costumes, and their Turkish sabres slung by cords. I listened attentively to their tales of the campaigns in Egypt and the battles fought there. I enjoyed the repetition of the celebrated names, Pyramids, Nile, Cairo, Alexandria, Acre, and so forth. But what delighted me most was the sight of the young mameluke Roustan. He had waited in the antechamber, and I went there more than once to admire his costume, which he was pleased to show me. He could already speak French pretty well, and I was never tired of asking him questions. General Lannes remembered how he had let me fire his pistols in 1793, when he was serving under my father at the camp of Le Miral. He was very good-natured to me, and neither of us suspected then that I should one day be his aide-de-camp, and that he would die in my arms at Essling.

General Murat had been born in our own neighbourhood, and as he had been shopboy to a haberdasher at Saint-Céré in the days when my family used to spend the winter there, he had often come with goods for my mother. My father, too, had done him several kindnesses, for which he was always grateful. He kissed me and reminded me how he had often carried me when I was a baby. Later on I shall relate the life of this famous man who rose so high from so low an origin.

General Bonaparte and my father returned into the sitting-room, and introduced to each other the members of their respective staffs. Lannes and Murat were old acquaintances of my father's, and he received them very cordially. He was somewhat cold towards Berthier, whom he had seen in old days at Marseilles when he was in the body-guard and Berthier an engineer. General Bonaparte asked me very courteously for news of my mother, and complimented me in a kind manner on having taken up the military career so young. Then, gently pinching my ear—the flattering caress which he always employed to persons with whom he was pleased—he said, addressing my father, 'Here will be a second General Marbot

some day.' His forecast has been verified, though at that time I had little hope of it. All the same, his words made me feel proud all over—it doesn't take much to awaken the pride of a child.

The visit came to an end, and my father gave no indication of what had passed between General Bonaparte and himself; but I learnt later on that Bonaparte, without actually betraying his schemes, had endeavoured by the most adroit cajoleries to enlist my father on his side. My father, however, steadily evaded the question.

So shocked was he at the sight of the people of Lyons running to meet Bonaparte, as if he were already sovereign of France, that he expressed a wish to get away next morning at daybreak; but his carriages required repair, and he was forced to stay an entire day at Lyons. I took the opportunity of getting a new forage-cap made, and in my delight at this purchase I paid no sort of heed to the political conversation which I heard all about me, nor, to tell the truth, did I understand much of it. My father went to return General Bonaparte's visit. They walked for a long time alone in the little garden of the hotel, while their staffs kept at a respectful distance. We saw them at one time vigorously gesticulating, at another talking more calmly; presently Bonaparte, coming close to my father with a coaxing air, took his arm in a friendly fashion. His motive, probably, was that the authorities who were in the courtyard and the many curious spectators who were crowding the neighbouring windows might say that General Marbot assented to General Bonaparte's plans. But this clever man never overlooked any means of reaching his end; some people he drew over, and wished to have it believed that he had also won to his side those whose sense of duty led them to resist him. Herein his success was wonderful.

My father came out from this second conversation even more thoughtful than from the first, and on entering the hotel he gave orders that we should proceed on the following day. But General Bonaparte was going to make a visit of inspection of the points in the neighbourhood of the town suitable for fortification, and all the post-horses had been engaged for him. For the moment I thought that my father would be angry, but he confined himself to saying: 'There's the beginning of omnipotence.' He gave orders that an effort should be made to hire some horses, so eager was he to get away from the town and to escape a spectacle which shocked him. No horses were to be found; thereupon Colonel Ménard, who was a native of

the South, and knew the country thoroughly, remarked that the road from Lyons to Avignon was terribly dilapidated, and that as there was every possibility that our carriages would get damaged, it would be much better to ship them on the Rhone, and descend the river in the midst of charming scenery. My father, who cared very little for the picturesque, would at any other time have rejected this suggestion; but as it gave him the chance of getting away a day sooner from the town of Lyons, where, under the existing circumstances, it was no pleasure to him to stay, he agreed to the journey by water. Colonel Ménard hired a large boat; two carriages were put on board, and very early next morning we all embarked. It was very near being the death of us. As usual in autumn, the water was very low; the boat every moment kept touching the bottom and sticking fast, and there was considerable fear that she would go to pieces. We slept the first night at Saint-Péray, the next at Tain, so we took two days to descend as far as the mouth of the Drôme. After that we found much more water, and got along quickly; but about a quarter of a league above Port Saint-Esprit we were struck by such a furious mistral that the boatmen could not reach the bank. They lost their heads, and instead of rowing began to pray, the current and the fierce gale driving the boat all the time towards the bridge. We were on the point of being dashed against one of the piles of the bridge and swamped, when my father and the rest of us caught up the boathooks and held them forward just at the right moment, and so parried the shock. The recoil was so severe that it threw us all on to the seats, but the direction of the boat had been changed, and by almost miraculous good fortune it slipped under the arch. The boatmen recovered a little from their terror, and resumed after a fashion the navigation of their vessel; but the gale continued, and the two carriages catching the wind made it almost impossible to steer. Ultimately we were cast ashore on a large island about six leagues above Avignon. The prow of the boat ran deep into the sand, in such a way that it would be impossible to pull it out without a great many hands, and the vessel took such a list to one side that we expected her every moment to fill. Some planks were placed between the boat and the shore, and by the help of a rope we all landed without accident, though not without danger. Though no rain fell it was impossible to think of re-embarking as long as the wind remained so high, so we began to explore the island. It was very large, and we thought at first uninhabited, but at last we discovered a farm. The kind people

received us well; we were famishing, having only a little bread with us, and it was impossible to go on board to get more provisions. They told us that the isle was full of fowls, which they allowed to run wild and shot when they wanted them. My father was very fond of shooting, and just now was glad of a distraction, so we borrowed the peasants' guns, took pitchforks and sticks, and started off laughing to shoot fowls. They were not easy to get at, for they flew like pheasants, but we killed several and collected a good many eggs in the woods. On our return to the farm a great fire was lighted in the open. We established ourselves in a bivouac round it, while my father's servant, with the help of the farmer's wife, dressed the fowls and the eggs. We had a merry supper, and afterwards went to bed in the hay, for none of us had the courage to accept the beds which the kind peasants offered us. At daybreak came the boatmen with the news that the wind had fallen; peasants and boatmen all took pick and shovel, and after some hours of hard work they got the vessel afloat again. We continued our voyage to Avignon, and arrived there without further accident, though what we had undergone was improved by rumour till the report reached Paris that my father and all his suite had perished in the waters of the Rhone.

The entry into Avignon, especially by the river, is very picturesque. The old papal castle, the ramparts of the town, its many towers, and the castle of Villeneuve over against it compose a charming picture. At Avignon we found Madame Ménard and one of her nieces; we spent three days in the town, and visited the beautiful country in the neighbourhood, not omitting the fountain of Vaucluse. My father was in no hurry to go, for M. R—— had written to him that, owing to the heat, which was still great in the South, he had been compelled to travel slowly, and there was no use in arriving before the horses. From Avignon we went on to Aix, but on reaching the bank of the Durance, which was then traversed in a ferry-boat, we found the river swollen beyond its banks to such an extent that it would be impossible to cross for five or six hours. We were consulting whether to return to Avignon, when the man who farmed the ferry, who was by way of being a gentleman, and owned a pretty country house on a height a few hundred yards from the bank, came and begged my father to rest there until his carriages could be got across. He accepted, in the hope that it would only be for a few hours; but it would seem that there had been a great storm in the

mountains about the source of the Durance, for the river continued to rise all day. We were therefore compelled to accept the offer of shelter for the night which was very cordially made by the master of the house, and as the day was fine we spent the whole of it in strolling about. This episode of our voyage I found very agreeable.

Next morning the stream was running yet more fiercely, and our entertainer, who was a hot Republican, seeing from his knowledge of the river that we were fixed for another twenty-four hours, went off, without a word to us, to the little town of Cavaillon, two leagues away, and announced to the patriots of the neighbourhood that he had General Marbot staying with him. Then he returned in triumph to his mansion, and an hour later we saw a cavalcade arrive, composed of the stoutest patriots of Cavaillon, with a request that my father would kindly accept a banquet which they offered in the name of the chief men of a town always eminent for its Republican sentiments.

My father, who had no taste for honours of this kind, refused at first; but the citizens were so urgent with their representations that everything had been prepared and the guests assembled, that he yielded, and we set out for Cavaillon. The best hotel was adorned with garlands and lined with all the local rank and fashion. After endless compliments we sat down round a huge table covered with the most elaborate dishes, especially ortolans, to which bird that country is a favourite haunt. There were vehement speeches against 'the enemies of liberty.' Numerous toasts were drunk, and we did not break up till ten o'clock—rather too late to return to Bompart. My father could not well leave his entertainers at the moment of rising from the table, so he decided to sleep at Cavaillon, and the rest of the evening passed in pretty noisy conversation. Gradually the company dropped off home, and we were left alone. Next morning, on rising, M. Gault asked the landlord what was our share of last night's festivity, supposing it to be a picnic, at which each guest would pay for his own dinner. The man handed him a bill for 1,500 francs, the good patriots not having paid a mortal sou! We heard afterwards that some had expressed a wish to pay their share, but the great majority had pointed out that to do so would be an insult to General Marbot! Captain Gault was furious; but my father, after recovering from his first astonishment, shouted with laughter, and bade the landlord come for his money to Bompart. We returned thither at once, and said nothing

about the affair to our host. His servants were handsomely vailed; and the Durance having fallen, we took the opportunity to cross it, and make our way to Aix. Though I was not old enough to discuss politics with my father, from things which I had heard him say, I was inclined to believe that his Republican views had in the past two years been much modified, and that some of the remarks made at the Cavaillon dinner had given them a final shock; but he never showed any annoyance on the subject of the so-called 'picnic.' On the contrary, he was much amused by the wrath of M. Gault, who kept saying: 'I do not wonder that those scamps ordered such quantities of ortolans, regardless of cost, and called for all those bottles of expensive wines.'

We slept at Aix, and pushed on to Nice. This was our last day of posting. As we crossed the lovely mountain and forest of the Esterel we met the colonel of the 1st Hussars, who was returning from the army to the depôt at Le Puy en Velay, with an escort of one officer and several troopers leading broken-down horses. His name was M. Picart; he had been left in command of his regiment, though very seldom at the front, in consideration of his merits as an administrator; and he was constantly being sent to the depôt to fit out men and horses, which he forwarded to the combatant squadrons. On seeing him my father stopped his carriage and alighted; and, after presenting me to my colonel, took him aside and begged him to suggest a non-commissioned officer of good character and education who might become my mentor. The colonel named Sergeant Pertelay. My father took a note of the name, and we went on to Nice. There we found Major R—— installed in a first-rate hotel, with our carriages and horses in very good condition.

CHAPTER VI.

The town of Nice was full of troops, among them a squadron of my regiment, the 1st Hussars. In the colonel's absence the regiment was commanded by Major Muller, a brave officer, father of the poor adjutant of the 7th Hussars who was wounded at my side by a cannon-ball at Waterloo. On learning that the divisional commander had arrived, Major Muller waited on my father; and it was settled that after a few days' rest I should begin my service in the 7th troop, commanded by Captain Mathis, a meritorious officer, who became colonel under the Empire and major-general under the Restoration.

Kind as my father was to me, I held him in such awe that in his presence I was extremely shy. He fancied me even more so than I really was, and used to say that I ought to have been a girl, often calling me 'Miss Marcellin.' This vexed me a good deal, especially now that I was a hussar. It was in order to overcome this shyness that my father wished me to serve with my comrades. Although, as I have said, it was impossible to enter the army otherwise than through the ranks, my father might have attached me to his personal service, as my regiment formed part of his division; but besides the reason which I have given, he wanted me to learn to saddle and bridle my own horse and to clean my own accoutrements. If he had allowed his son to enjoy any privileges it would have produced a bad effect in the troop. I had already been favoured in getting admitted to the regiment without a long and wearisome apprenticeship at the depôt.

I passed several days with my father and his staff going over the beautiful country about Nice. When the time came for me to join, my father directed Major Muller to send Sergeant Pertelay to him. Now you must know that there were in the regiment two brothers of this name, both sergeants, but quite unlike each other morally and physically. You might have thought that the author of *Les Deux Philibert*[1] had taken his

[1] [A popular comedy, by L. F. Picard, first produced in 1815.]

characters from these two men: the elder Pertelay being the wicked Philibert, the younger Pertelay the virtuous Philibert. It was the latter whom the colonel had intended to recommend as my mentor; but, being in a hurry, he had omitted when naming Pertelay to add 'junior.' Further, this Pertelay was not in the squadron at Nice, whereas the elder was actually in Troop 7, to which I was to belong. Major Muller therefore supposed that it was the elder brother whom the colonel had named to my father; and that this wild fellow had been selected in order to take the nonsense out of a mild and shy lad like myself. So he sent us Pertelay senior. This typical hussar of the old school was a hard drinker, a brawler, always ready for a quarrel and a fight; brave, moreover, to the point of rashness. He was absolutely ignorant of everything that did not concern his horse, his accoutrements, or his service in the field. Pertelay junior, on the other hand, was gentle, well-mannered, highly educated; and, being also a very handsome man and every whit as brave as his brother, he would certainly have got on fast had he not been killed, while still young, on the battle-field. However, to return to the elder. He came to my father's house, and what did we behold? A jolly ruffian—very well set up, I must admit—with his shako over his ear, his sabre trailing, his florid countenance divided by an enormous scar, moustaches half a foot long waxed and turned up to his ears, on his temples two long locks of hair plaited, which came from under his shako and fell on his breast, and withal such an air!—a regular rowdy air, heightened still further by his words, jerked out in the most barbarous French-Alsatian gibberish. This last peculiarity was no surprise to my father, for he knew that the 1st Hussars were the old Bercheny regiment, consisting formerly of nothing but Germans; indeed, down to 1793 the word of command used to be given in German, which was the language of most of the officers and the troopers, who were nearly all born in the provinces on the banks of the Rhine. What was a surprise, however, was the demeanour, the answers, and the swaggering manner of my mentor. Later on, indeed, I learnt that my father had had some hesitation in entrusting me to the hands of this fellow, but M. Gault pointed out that Colonel Picart had specified him as the best non-commissioned officer in the squadron, and so he resolved to give him a trial. Accordingly I followed Pertelay, who took my arm in an off-hand way, came to my room, showed me how to pack up my things, and brought me to a little barrack establishment in an old convent

and occupied by a squadron of the 1st Hussars. He made me saddle and unsaddle a handsome little horse which my father had bought for me. Then he showed me how to dispose of my cloak and accoutrements, showed me, in short, all that was to be shown. When he had explained everything he bethought him that it was time to go to dinner; for my father, wishing me to take my meals with my mentor, had allowed us extra pay for this item. Pertelay brought me to a little inn, where the dining-room was full of hussars, grenadiers, and soldiers of all arms. Our dinner was served, and on the table was placed an enormous bottle of the strongest and roughest red wine, of which Pertelay poured me out a bumper. We clinked our glasses; my friend emptied his. I set mine down without putting it to my lips, for I had never drunk unmixed wine, and I did not like the smell of this. I confessed as much to my mentor, who straightway shouted in a stentorian voice, 'Waiter, lemonade for this lad—he never drinks wine.' Shouts of laughter rang through the whole room. I was much abashed, but I could not make up my mind to taste this wine, nor did I dare to ask for water, so I dined without drinking.

The apprenticeship of a soldier's life is at all times pretty rough; it was especially so at the time of which I am writing, and I had some disagreeable moments to pass. But what seemed to me intolerable was to be obliged to sleep with another hussar, for the regulations at that time only allowed one bed for two soldiers. Non-commissioned officers alone had a bed to themselves. The first night which I passed in barracks I had just got into bed, when a strapping great hussar, who had come in an hour after the others, came up to the bed, and, seeing that there was someone there already, unhooked the lamp and put it under my nose to have a better look at me. As I watched him undressing I had no idea that he proposed to take his place by me, but I was soon undeceived when he said roughly, 'Make room, recruit.' Therewith he got into the bed, lay down so as to take up three-quarters of it, and set to work snoring in a high key. I found it impossible to sleep, chiefly by reason of the horrible smell which emanated from a great bundle placed by my comrade under the bolster to raise his head. I couldn't imagine what it could be. In order to find out I slipt my hand gently towards the object and discovered a leathern apron well impregnated with cobbler's wax. My amiable bedfellow was one of the regimental shoemaker's assistants.

I was so disgusted that I got up, dressed, and went to the stable to sleep on a truss of straw. Next day I imparted my misfortune to Pertelay, who reported it to our sub-lieutenant. He happened to be a man of good breeding, by name Lesteinschneider (German for 'lapidary'). Under the Empire he became a colonel, and senior aide-de-camp to Bessières, and was killed. Understanding how disagreeable it must be to me to sleep with a shoemaker, he ordered me on his own responsibility a bed in the non-commissioned officers' room, which was a great comfort to me.

Although with the Revolution military costume had become slovenly, the 1st Hussars had always preserved theirs as correct as in the days when they were Bercheny. Save, therefore, for the physical dissimilarities imposed by nature, all the troopers were bound to get themselves up alike, and as the hussar regiments at that time wore not only a pig-tail but also long 'love locks,' locks on the temples, and had their moustaches turned up, everyone belonging to the corps was expected to have moustaches, pigtails, and locks. As I had none of them, my mentor took me to the regimental barber, where I purchased a sham pigtail and locks. These were attached to my hair, which was already fairly long, for since my enlistment I had let it grow. I was embarrassed at first by this make-up, but in a few days I got used to it, and enjoyed it because I thought it gave me the air of an old hussar. With regard to moustaches the case was different. Of them I had no more than a girl, and as a beardless face would have spoilt the uniformity of the squadron, Pertelay, in conformity with the practice of the regiment, took a pot of blacking and with his thumb made two enormous hooks covering my upper lip and reaching almost to my eyes. At that time the shakoes had no peak, so it happened that during reviews or when I was doing vedette duty and was bound to remain perfectly motionless, the scorching rays of the Italian sun pouring down on to my face used to suck up the liquid part of the blacking with which my moustaches had been made, and the blacking as it dried drew my skin in a very unpleasant way. Still I did not so much as wink: I was a hussar; the word had a magical effect on me, and, besides, when I entered on a military career I thoroughly understood that my first duty was to conform to the regulations.

Before my father left Nice the news arrived of the overthrow of the Directory on the 18th Brumaire and the establishment of the Consulate. My father's opinion of the Directory

had not been such as to make him regret its fall, but he feared that in the intoxication of power Bonaparte, when he had restored order in France, would not content himself with the modest title of consul, and predicted that before long he would want to make himself king. He was only wrong as to the title: in four years' time Napoleon made himself emperor. Whatever his presentiments may have been, my father rejoiced at being absent from Paris on the 18th Brumaire; if he had been there I think he would have vigorously opposed Bonaparte's enterprise. But being on service, at the head of a division in face of the enemy, he felt able to take refuge in the passive obedience of a soldier. He rejected the proposals which several generals and colonels made to him to march on Paris at the head of their troops. 'Who,' he asked, 'will defend the frontier if we desert it? And what will become of France if the miseries of a civil war are added to our war against the foreigner?' By this caution he kept the excitement in check, but, at the same time, he none the less felt very strongly on the subject of the recent *coup d'état*. He adored his country, and would have wished to see her saved without being brought under the yoke of a tyrant.

My father's chief motive, as I have said, in making me go through my service in the ranks, was to get rid of my rather foolish schoolboy air, which my short stay in the world of Paris had not removed. He succeeded beyond his hopes, for, living in the middle of the boisterous hussars, and having for my tutor a kind of Pandour who laughed at all my follies, I learnt to suit my conduct to my company, and for fear of being laughed at for my shyness I became a perfect daredevil. I was not, however, as yet qualified to be admitted into a sort of brotherhood which, under the name of 'the gang,' drew its initiated from all the squadrons of the 1st Hussars. The 'gang' was composed of the most reckless and the bravest soldiers of the regiment; its members supported each other against all comers, especially in presence of the enemy. They called each other by the name of *loustic*,[1] and were to be known by means of a notch made with a knife in the first button of the row on the right side of the pelisse and the jacket. The officers knew of the existence of the gang, but as its greatest crimes were limited to the occasional looting of sheep and fowls, or playing tricks on the inhabitants, while, on the other hand, the *loustics*

[1] [*Loustic* = 'joker'; German, *lustig*. The term seems to have been first in use in the Swiss regiments of the later Monarchy (Littré).]

were always the first under fire, the chiefs winked at it. Featherbrain that I was, I was eager to be admitted into this society of roysterers; it seemed to me that it would give me a respectable position among my comrades; but it was all very well to frequent the fencing-school, to learn foil and broad-sword, pistol and carbine, to elbow out of the way everyone I met, to let my sabre trail, and wear my shako over one ear: the members of the gang looked upon me as a child and refused to admit me. However, an unforeseen adventure brought about my unanimous election, in the following way.

At that time the Army of Italy was occupying Liguria, extended on a front more than sixty leagues in length, its right on the Gulf of Spezia beyond Genoa, the centre at Finale, and the left on the Var—that is, the French frontier. We had, therefore, the sea in our rear, and were fronting towards Piedmont, which was occupied by the Austrian army, separated from us by the spur of the Apennines which extends from the Var to Gavi. It was a false position, for the French army was exposed to be cut in two, which actually happened some months later; but I will not anticipate. My father had been ordered to concentrate at Savona, and established his head-quarters in the bishop's palace; the infantry was distributed among the country towns and villages in the neighbourhood, to watch the valleys through which issue the roads leading to Piedmont. The 1st Hussars had come from Nice, and were bivouacking in a plain called La Madona. The enemy's out-posts were at Dego, four or five leagues from us, on the reverse slope of the Apennines. The mountain-tops were covered with snow, while Savona and the neighbourhood enjoyed a mild temperature. Our bivouac would have been delightful if provisions had been more plentiful. But there was then no high road from Nice to Genoa; the English cruisers held the sea; and the army had to live on supplies brought on mules along the *Corniche*, or landed from such small coasters as could slip along unperceived. These precarious methods barely sufficed to provide the grain necessary for the daily bread of the troops. Happily, however, the country produces plenty of wine, which served to keep up the soldiers' spirits and make them bear their hardships more cheerfully. So one lovely day, as I was walking along the shore with friend Pertelay, he spied a public-house in a garden full of orange-trees and olives. Under these were tables, at which soldiers of all arms were sitting, and he proposed that we should go in. I had not been able to get over my dislike of wine; but out of friendship I followed him.

I may mention that at this time a cavalry soldier's belt had no hook, so that when he went on foot he had to hold the scabbard of his sword in the left hand, letting the point trail on the ground. This made a clatter and gave a roystering air, which was quite enough to make me adopt the fashion. But behold, as I entered the garden the end of my scabbard touched the foot of a gigantic horse-artilleryman who was taking his ease stretched out on his chair, his legs in front of him. The horse-artillery (or 'flying artillery' as it was then called) had been formed, at the beginning of the Revolutionary wars, of volunteers from the grenadier companies; and the opportunity had been taken to get rid of some of the more disorderly from the regiments. The 'gallopers' were therefore renowned for their courage, and for their love of a quarrel no less. The man whom my sabre had touched said to me in a stentorian voice and a very majestic tone: 'You hussar, your sword trails far too much.' I was going on without taking any notice, when friend Pertelay, touching my elbow, whispered in a low tone: 'Answer him, "Come and pick it up."' I, to the gunner: 'Come and pick it up.' 'That is easily done,' replied he. Pertelay, prompting me again: 'We have got to see that.' Thereupon the gunner —the Goliath, I might say, for he was all six feet high—sat upright with a threatening air. My mentor dashed between him and me. All the artillerymen in the garden at once took their comrade's part; but a crowd of hussars ranged up alongside of Pertelay and myself. Tempers grew hot; all shouted and spoke at once: I quite thought there would be a general scrimmage. The hussars, however, being two to one, were the calmer; and the artillerymen perceived that if swords were drawn they would get the worst of it. So at length the giant was brought to see that in touching his foot with the point of my sword I had in nowise insulted him, and that between us two things need go no further. But in the tumult an artillery bugler some twenty years old had been saying rude things to me, and in my anger I had pushed him so roughly that he had fallen head foremost into a muddy ditch. So it was agreed that this lad and I should fight with sabres, and we left the garden, followed by all present. Behold us, then, close to the water's edge, on fine firm sands, ready for a bout with the steel. Pertelay knew that I was fairly good with the sabre, but still he gave me some advice as to the best method of attack, and fastened my sword-hilt to my hand with a large handkerchief which he wrapped round my arm.

Here I may mention that my father had a horror of duelling,

based not only on his views as to the barbarism of the practice, but also on a recollection of his youthful days in the body-guard, when he had acted as second to a much-loved comrade who had been killed in single combat in a most futile cause. For whatever reason, his first step on assuming a command was to order the gendarmes to arrest and bring before him any soldiers whom they might catch crossing swords. The artillery bugler and I were well aware of this order; none the less had we thrown off our jackets and stood sabre in hand. I had my back to the town of Savona; my adversary faced it. Just as we were about to begin our fence, I saw the bugler leap to one side, catch up his jacket and bolt. 'Running away, coward?' I shouted, and was pursuing him, when a grip of iron seized my collar from behind. I turned, and found myself in the hands of eight or ten gendarmes. I knew then why my antagonist had bolted. The spectators had done the same, and were making off as fast as their legs could carry them, Master Pertelay among the number, in dire fear of being arrested and brought before the general.

There I was, disarmed and a prisoner! I slipped on my jacket and followed the gendarmes, with a pretty hang-dog look. I did not give my name, and they brought me to the bishop's palace, where my father lodged. He was at that moment with General (afterwards Marshal) Suchet, who had come to Savona to talk over some service matters with him; and they were walking in a gallery open to the court. The gendarmes brought me up, without a notion that I was the general's son, and the corporal explained the reason of my arrest. My father, in his most severe manner, gave me a sharp reprimand, and at the end of his admonition said to the corporal, 'Take this hussar to the citadel.' I retired without a word, and without a suspicion on the part of General Suchet, who did not know me, that the scene to which he had been a witness had passed between father and son. He did not learn our relationship till the next day, and has often since then laughed over the story with me. On reaching the citadel, an old relic of the Genoese, standing near the harbour, I was shut up in a vast room lighted by a dormer looking towards the sea. Gradually I got over my excitement, and felt that I had deserved the reprimand which I had undergone. At the same time I thought more of having given pain to my father than of having disobeyed my commanding officer. I spent the rest of the day gloomily enough; and in the evening an old pensioner of the Genoese army brought me a jug of water, a piece of ammuni-

tion bread, and a truss of straw. I flung myself on it, unable to eat. Nor could I sleep; first, because I was too much upset, and, further, by reason of the evolutions of some big rats, who soon took possession of my bread. I was in the dark, brooding over my sorrows, when towards ten o'clock I heard the bolts of my prison drawn, and behold, my father's faithful old servant, Spire. From him I learnt that after I had been sent to the citadel Colonel Ménard, Captain Gault, and all my father's officers had interceded for me, that the general had agreed to pardon me, and had sent him, Spire, to fetch me, and to bear the order for my liberation to the governor of the fort. I was taken before this governor, General Buget, an excellent man, who had lost an arm in battle, and who knew me, and had a great regard for my father. He returned me my sword, and thought it his duty to give me a long lecture. I listened patiently enough, but with the thought that I had got to have another, much more severe, from my father. This I did not feel that I had courage to endure, and I resolved to get off it if I could. Well, we were escorted past the gates of the citadel, and, as the night was dark, Spire walked in front of me with a lantern. As we made our way through the narrow and tortuous streets, the good man, in his delight at bringing me back, enlarged upon all the comforts that awaited me at head-quarters. 'But you know,' he added, 'you may expect a fine scolding from your father.' This last remark fixed my resolution, and in order to leave time for my father's wrath to cool, I decided to return to the bivouac at Madona, and to keep out of his presence for several days. I could, no doubt, have got away without playing any trick on poor Spire; but I was afraid that he might pursue me by the light of the lantern which he carried, so with a kick I sent it flying ten yards away, and ran for my life. As the good man groped about after his lantern I could hear him exclaim, 'You little scamp, I'll tell your father! I'm blessed if he was not quite right to put you with those Bercheny rascals. A fine school for a scapegrace!'

I wandered for a while through the deserted streets, and at length found the road to La Madona and reached the bivouac of my regiment. All the hussars thought I was in prison; but as soon as I was recognised by the firelight they came round me, asking questions, and shouting with laughter when I related how I got away from the trusty servant charged to bring me to the general. The members of the 'gang' were especially delighted with this sign of a resolute

character, and unanimously agreed to admit me into their society. They were just planning an expedition for that very night: to go to the gates of Dego, and carry off a herd of cattle belonging to the Austrian army. The French generals and corps-commanders were obliged to feign ignorance of the excursions which the soldiers made beyond the outposts, since there was no other way of procuring a regular supply of victuals. Thus in every regiment the bravest men had formed marauding bands, who had a wonderful knack of discovering the places where the enemy's victualling went forward, and of getting hold, by cunning or boldness, of his stores.

A scoundrelly horse-dealer had given information to the 'gang' of the 1st Hussars that a herd of cattle which he had sold to the Austrians was parked in a meadow a quarter of a league from Dego. Accordingly, sixty hussars, armed only with their carbines, started off to lift them. We went for several leagues through the mountains by side-roads of the most fearful kind so as to avoid the highway, and surprised five Croats who were on guard over the herd asleep in a shed. Lest they should give the alarm to the garrison of Dego, we tied them up and left them there, carrying off the herd without having to strike a blow. By the time we got back to our bivouac we were tired, but highly pleased at the smart trick we had played the enemy, to say nothing of having got our victuals. I have told this story to show the state of destitution into which the Army of Italy had fallen, and how disorganised troops must get when left to themselves to such an extent that their officers not only tolerate expeditions of this kind but profit by the victuals so obtained, affecting all the while to be ignorant whence they have come.

CHAPTER VII.

With the good fortune which attended my military career, I avoided altogether the grade of corporal, passing at a leap from the ranks to the position of sergeant, which befell in this wise. To the left of my father's division was stationed that of General Séras, with its head-quarters at Finale. This division occupied that part of Liguria where the mountains are steepest and consequently consisted of infantry only, there being no room for cavalry to move, save in very small detachments, in the few passes which here connect the Mediterranean coast with Piedmont. General Séras, having received orders from the commander-in-chief, General Championnet, to push a reconnaissance into the valleys beyond Monte Santo Giacomo, wrote to my father begging him to lend him for this expedition a detachment of fifty hussars. My father naturally agreed, and appointed Lieutenant Lesteinschneider to command the detachment of which my section formed part. We started from La Madona to go to Finale ; the only road along the coast then was a very bad one, called La Corniche. The lieutenant happened to dislocate his foot in consequence of a fall from his horse, and the next in rank to him was Sergeant Canon, a fine young man, well educated, possessing plenty of ability, and still more assurance. On the following day General Séras led his force over Monte San Giacomo, where we bivouacked in the snow. We were pretty certain the next day, if we advanced, to come in contact with the enemy; but in what strength should we find them? The general had no notion; his orders were to reconnoitre the position of the Austrians in this part of the line, but on no account to engage if he found them in force. It had struck him that in advancing his infantry division through a mountain country where a column often cannot be perceived until one comes face to face with it at the turn of a gorge, he might, against his will, be drawn into a serious action against superior forces and compelled to execute a dangerous retreat. He resolved, therefore, to march cautiously, and to send forward to two or three leagues' distance a detachment which might

explore the country, and, above all, make some prisoners from whom he could hope to get better information than the peasants were either able or willing to give. But feeling also that an infantry detachment would be in an awkward position if he sent it too far away, and that, moreover, men on foot would not be able to bring the desired intelligence quickly enough, the task of discovery and exploration was assigned to the fifty hussars. As the country was very much broken, he handed a map to our sergeant, and gave him full instructions, both in writing and *vivâ voce*, in presence of the detachment. Two hours before daylight he sent us off, repeating that we must march, without fail, until we touched the enemy's outposts, from which he was exceedingly anxious that we might be able to bring away some prisoners.

M. Canon's dispositions were perfect. He sent out a small advance-guard, covered his flank with scouts, and took, in short, all the precautions customary in guerilla warfare. Two leagues from camp we came to a large inn ; our sergeant questioned the innkeeper, and was informed that a good hour further on we should find an Austrian corps, the strength of which he could not state. He knew, however, that the leading regiment was one of very ill-conditioned hussars, who had maltreated sundry of the inhabitants. With this information we continued our march, but we had hardly gone a few hundred paces when M. Canon began to writhe on his horse, saying that he was in horrible pain, and that he could not go any farther, but must hand over the command of the detachment to Sergeant Pertelay the elder, the next in seniority to himself. Pertelay, however, remarked that, being an Alsatian, he could not read French, and consequently would be unable to make any use of the map or understand the general's written instructions, so he would not take command. All the other sergeants, old Bercheny men, with no more tincture of letters than Pertelay, refused on similar grounds ; the corporals the same. In vain did I offer, in order to induce them, to read the general's instructions, and to point out our route on the map to any sergeant who would take the command ; they repeated their refusal, and, to my great surprise, all these veterans answered : 'Take command yourself ; we will follow you and obey you implicitly.' All the detachment expressed the same desire, and as it was clear to me that if I declined we should not get any farther, and that the honour of the regiment would suffer—for in some way or other the order of General Séras would have to be executed or his division might perhaps come into serious trouble—I

accepted the command after having asked M. Canon whether he felt fit to resume it. On this he renewed his complaints, left us, and returned to the inn. I must admit that I believed him to be really indisposed; but the men of the detachment, who knew him better, indulged in some very insulting banter with regard to him.

I may, I think, say without boasting that nature has allotted to me a fair share of courage; I will even add that there was a time when I enjoyed being in danger, as my thirteen wounds and some distinguished services prove, I think, sufficiently. When, therefore, I took command of the fifty men who had come under my orders in such unusual circumstances, a mere trooper as I was and seventeen years old, I resolved to show my comrades that if I had not yet much experience or military talent, I at least possessed pluck. So I resolutely put myself at their head and marched on in what we knew was the direction of the enemy. We had been some time on the way, when our scouts perceived a peasant trying to hide himself; they quickly captured him and brought him in. I questioned him; it appeared that he came from four or five leagues off, and averred that he had not met any Austrian troops. I was sure that he was lying through fear or through cunning, for we must be very near the enemy's cantonments. I remembered to have read in the *Parfait Partisan*, of which my father had given me a copy, that in order to get information from the inhabitants of a country which one is passing through in time of war one must sometimes frighten them; so I put on a big voice, and, trying to give my youthful countenance a ferocious air, I cried: 'What, you scamp! You have just come through a country occupied by a strong Austrian army corps, and you pretend to have seen nothing? You're a spy. Here, shoot him on the spot!' I ordered four hussars to dismount, giving them a sign that they were to do the man no harm. The man, seeing himself in the hands of troopers who had just cocked their carbines, was in such a fright that he swore to tell me all he knew. He was the servant of a convent, and was charged with a letter to some relations of the prior; he had been ordered if he met the French not to tell them where the Austrians were, but since he was forced to confess he informed us that at a distance of a league from us several of the enemy's regiments were quartered in the villages, while there were a hundred Barco Hussars in a hamlet which we saw close at hand. When questioned as to the kind of guard which the hussars kept, the peasant replied that they had in advance of the houses a grand guard consisting

of a dozen dismounted men posted in a garden surrounded by hedges, and that at the moment when he had come through the hamlet the rest of the hussars were getting ready to water their horses in a little pond at the further side of the houses.

Having got this information, I made my plans at once. I would avoid passing in front of the grand guard, who, being entrenched behind their hedges, were safe from a cavalry attack, while the fire of their carbines might kill some of my men and give warning of the approach of the French. I must therefore turn the hamlet, reach the watering-place, and fall upon the enemy unawares. But how was I to get round unperceived? I ordered the peasant to guide us, making a circuit, and promised to let him go as soon as we were at the other side of the hamlet. However, he was not willing to march, so I made one hussar take him by the collar while another held the muzzle of a pistol to his ear, and he had to do as he was told. He guided us very well; our movement was masked by high hedges. We turned the village successfully, and perceived at the edge of the little pond the Austrian squadron quietly watering their horses. All the troopers had their arms with them, as is customary with outposts, but the officers had neglected a very essential precaution, namely, to allow only a certain number of horses to be unbridled and to drink at once, and to send the sections into the water in succession, so that half may always be on the bank ready to repulse an enemy. Trusting in the distance of the French and the vigilance of the post placed in advance of the village, the enemy's commander had thought it unnecessary to take this precaution, which was fatal to him.

At five hundred paces from the little pond I let our guide go; he made off as fast as his legs would carry him; while I, sabre in hand, and forbidding my comrades to shout before they were engaged, dashed at full gallop on the enemy's hussars. They did not catch sight of us till the moment before we were at the edge of the pond. The banks were almost everywhere too steep for the horses to climb, the only practicable approach being at the spot where the villagers drew their water, where there was a pretty wide opening. But at this point more than a hundred troopers were massed, all having their bridles over their arms, and their carbines in the buckets —so perfectly at their ease that some were singing. Their surprise may be imagined when I first attacked them with a carbine-fire which killed several, wounded many, and knocked over a great number of horses. They were thrown into utter confusion, in spite of which the captain, rallying the men who

were next the bank, forced his way out, and opened upon us a fire which, though ill-sustained, wounded two men. They then charged us; but Pertelay having slain the captain with a sabre-cut, they were rolled back into the pond. Some in their efforts to escape the fire reached the other bank; many lost their footing, and a good number of men and horses were drowned, while those of the Austrian troopers who got across from the other side of the pond, not being able to get their horses up the bank, abandoned them, and, clambering up by help of some trees, fled in disorder across the fields. At the sound of fighting the grand guard hurried up. We met them with the sabre and put them to flight also. Meanwhile some thirty of the enemy were still in the pond; but fearing to urge their horses forward, when they saw that the only place where a landing could be effected was in our hands, they called out that they surrendered. I accepted, and as they came ashore made them lay down their arms. Most of the men and horses were wounded; but, wishing to take away a trophy of our victory, I chose seventeen troopers and the same number of horses who were not much injured, and placed them in the middle of my detachment. Then I left the other Barcos to themselves, and made off at a gallop, turning the village again.

It was just as well that I did retreat promptly, for, as I had foreseen, the fugitives had given the alarm in the neighbouring cantonments, which already had been put on the alert by the musketry fire. All stood to their arms, and half an hour later there were more than 1,500 cavalry on the banks of the little pond, and several thousand infantry close behind. But our wounded were able to gallop, and by that time we were a couple of leagues away. We halted a moment on the top of a hill to dress wounds, and laughed a good deal to see in the distance several columns starting on our tracks. We knew quite well that they would not catch us, because, fearing a possible ambush, they were advancing very slowly and feeling their way; so that we were quite out of danger. I told Pertelay to take the two best mounted hussars and gallop forward to tell General Séras the result of our mission; then I dressed my detachment carefully, and with the prisoners in the middle, well guarded, I trotted easily along the road to the inn. It is impossible to describe the joy of my comrades and the congratulations which they addressed to me as we went along. It was all summed up in the words which to their mind expressed the height of eulogy: 'You thoroughly deserve to belong to the Bercheny Hussars, the first regiment in the world.'

What, meanwhile, had been passing at San Giacomo? After waiting for some hours, General Séras, impatient for news, perceived from the heights some smoke on the horizon; his aide-de-camp, laying his ear on a drum placed upon the ground, was able, by this common military artifice, to hear the sound of distant musketry. The general became uneasy, and, feeling sure that the cavalry detachment must be engaged with the enemy, took a regiment of infantry and went forward as far as the inn. There he saw a hussar's horse in the shed, hitched up to the rack; Sergeant Canon's, in fact. The innkeeper appeared, and from him the general learnt that the sergeant in command of the hussars had got no farther than the inn, where he had been for some hours in the dining-room. The general entered, and found M. Canon asleep by the fire, with a huge ham, two empty bottles, and a cup of coffee in front of him. The poor sergeant was roused from his slumbers, and tried once more to plead the excuse of sudden indisposition. But the accusing remains of the mighty meal he had just eaten destroyed all belief in his malady, and General Séras was pretty rough with him. His wrath was increased by the thought that a detachment of fifty cavalry, entrusted to the command of a common trooper, had probably been destroyed by the enemy. At that moment Pertelay and his two hussars galloped up, announcing our triumph, and our immediate return with seventeen prisoners. As in spite of this happy result of our expedition the general continued to heap reproaches on Canon, Pertelay said with rough ardour, 'Do not scold him, general; he is such a coward that, if he had led us, we were bound to fail.' This way of putting the matter naturally did not improve poor M. Canon's already awkward position; the general put him under arrest, and degraded him on the spot, having his stripes torn off in presence of the regiment and the fifty hussars; then, turning to me, who had just come up, and not knowing my name, he said: 'You have performed admirably a duty which is usually entrusted only to officers. I am sorry that, as a general of division, I have not the power to appoint you sub-lieutenant; I will, however, ask your promotion to that rank of the commander-in-chief. Meanwhile, I make you sergeant.' He ordered his aide-de-camp to announce my promotion formally to the detachment. In order to do this, the aide-de-camp had to ask my name; and then General Séras learned for the first time that I was the son of his colleague General Marbot. I was very glad of this adventure, because it would prove to my father that favour had nothing to do with my promotion.

CHAPTER VIII.

The information which General Séras got from the prisoners having determined him to advance the next day, he sent orders to his division to descend from the heights of San Giacomo, and to bivouac that same night near the inn. The prisoners were forwarded to Finale. The horses were by right the property of the hussars; they were all good horses, but, according to the existing custom, which was established in order to benefit ill-mounted officers, a *prize* horse was never sold for more than five louis. It was an established price, and paid in cash. The sale began as soon as the tents were pitched; General Séras, his staff officers, and the colones, and majors of the regiments soon carried off our seventeen horses, which brought the sum of eighty-five louis. This was handed over to my detachment, and the hussars, who had received no pay for more than six months, were delighted with this windfall, the merit of which they ascribed to me. I had some pieces of gold on me, so, in order to pay my footing as a sergeant, I not only refused to take my share of the purchase-money of the horses, but I bought from the innkeeper three sheep, a gigantic cheese, and a cask of wine, with which my detachment had a blow-out. This was one of the happiest days of my life; it was the 10th Frimaire, year 8.

On the next and following days the division of General Séras had several little engagements with the enemy, during which I continued to command my fifty hussars, doing scout duty, to the general's satisfaction. In his report to General Championnet General Séras praised my conduct in stately terms, and reported it also to my father; so that when, a few days later, I brought my detachment back to Savona, my father received me with every sign of affection. I was in raptures. When I rejoined our bivouac where the regiment was all again assembled, the troopers of my detachment who had got there before me related what we had done, always giving me the lion's share of the success; so I was received with acclamation by officers and soldiers, as well as by my new

comrades the non-commissioned officers, who presented me with my sergeant's stripes. That day I saw, for the first time, Pertelay junior, who was just back from Genoa, where he had been for some months on special service. I made great friends with this excellent man, and was sorry that I had not had him for mentor at the beginning of my career, for he gave me good advice, which made me quieter, and caused me to break off my connection with the 'gang.'

The commander-in-chief, having in view certain operations in the interior of Piedmont, in the direction of Cuneo and Mondovi, and being very short of cavalry, directed my father to send him the 1st Hussars. As a matter of fact, we could stay no longer at La Madona, for want of forage. I took leave of my father with much regret, and departed with the regiment. We followed the Corniche as far as Alberga, crossed the Apennines, in spite of the snow, and reached the fertile plains of Piedmont. The commander-in-chief fought a series of actions in the neighbourhood of Fossano, Novi, and Mondovi, with varying success.

In some of these fights I had occasion to see Brigadier-General Macard, a soldier of fortune, who had been carried by the whirlwind of the Revolution, almost without intermediate steps, from the rank of trumpet-major to that of general officer. He was an excellent specimen of the officers who were called into existence by chance and their own courage, and who, while they displayed a very genuine valour before the enemy, were none the less unfitted by their want of education for filling exalted positions. He was chiefly remarkable for a very quaint peculiarity. Of colossal size and extraordinary bravery, this singular person, when he was about to charge at the head of his troops, invariably cried, 'Look here! I'm going to dress like a beast.' Therewith he would take off his coat, his vest, his shirt, and keep on nothing except his plumed hat, his leather breeches, and his boots. Stripped thus to the waist, General Macard offered to view a chest almost as shaggy as a bear's, which gave him a very strange appearance. When he had once got on what he very truly called his beast's clothing, General Macard would dash forward recklessly, sabre in hand, and swearing like a pagan, on the enemy's cavalry. But he very seldom got at them, for at the sight of this giant, half-naked, hairy all over, and in such a strange outfit, who was hurling himself at them and uttering the most fearful yells, his opponents would bolt on all sides, scarcely knowing if they had a man to deal with or some strange wild animal.

General Macard was, as might be expected, completely ignorant, which sometimes caused great amusement to the better-educated officers under his command. One day one of these came to ask leave to go into the neighbouring town to order himself a pair of boots. 'By Jove!' said the general, 'that will suit well; as you are going to a shoemaker, just come here and take my measure and order me a pair too.' The officer, much surprised, replied that he could not take his measure, as, never having been a shoemaker, he had not the least idea how to set about it. 'What!' cried the general, 'I sometimes see you pass whole days looking at the mountains, pencilling and drawing lines, and when I ask you what you are doing, you answer that you are measuring the mountains; well, if you can measure objects more than a league away from you, what do you mean by telling me that you cannot take my measure for a pair of boots when you have got me under your hand? Come, take my measure without any more ado.' The officer assured him that it was impossible; the general insisted, got angry, began to swear; and it was only with great difficulty that other officers, attracted by the noise, succeeded in bringing this ridiculous scene to an end. The general never would understand how an officer who measured the mountains could be unable to measure a man for a pair of boots.

You must not think from this anecdote that all the general officers of the Army of Italy were of the same sort as brave General Macard; far from it. It included a great number of men distinguished for their education and their manners, but at this period it still contained several commanders who, as I have just said, were out of place in the upper ranks of the army. They were gradually eliminated.

The 1st Hussars took part in all the combats which at this time were fought in Piedmont, and went near to lose considerably in its encounters with the Austrian heavy cavalry. After several marches and counter-marches and a succession of small affairs almost every day, General Championnet, having brought up the centre and the left of his army between Cuneo and Mondovi on the 10th Nivose, attacked several divisions of the enemy. The fight took place in a plain intersected with low hills and clumps of wood. The 1st Hussars attached to General Beaumont's brigade were placed at the extreme right of the French army. As you are aware, the number of soldiers and officers comprising a squadron is fixed by the regulations. Our regiment, having suffered in the preceding affairs, could only put three squadrons in line that day instead of four; but

there remained some thirty men as supernumeraries, among them five non-commissioned officers, including myself and the brothers Pertelay. We were formed in two sections, commanded by the brave and intelligent Pertelay junior. General Beaumont, who knew his capacity, directed him to scout on the right flank of the army, giving him no special instruction, but orders to act as seemed best under the circumstances. We therefore left the regiment and went to search the country. Meanwhile a brisk combat took place between the two forces. After an hour we were falling back on our main body without having met anything on the flank, when Pertelay perceived in face of us, and consequently on the extreme left of the enemy's line, a battery of eight pieces, whose fire was doing much execution in the French ranks. With unpardonable imprudence this Austrian battery, with a view of getting better aim, had been brought up to a little plateau seven or eight hundred paces in advance of the infantry division to which it belonged. The commander of the artillery believed himself to be quite safe, thinking that, as the point which he occupied commanded the whole French line, if any force was detached to attack him, he would perceive it in time to fall back upon the Austrian line. He had not considered that a little clump of trees very near his position might conceal a body of French. It did not as yet contain any; but Pertelay resolved to lead his section thither, and thence to charge upon the Austrian battery. To conceal his movement from the enemy's gunners he acted on the well-known principle that in war no one takes any notice of a solitary horseman. His design, as he explained it to us, was to send us individually round by a hollow road until, one after another, we should get behind the wood, which was to the left of the enemy's battery; thence we were to make a dash upon it all at once without any fear of his shot, seeing that we should come up on the flank of the guns; we should capture these, and bring them to the French army. The movement was executed without being perceived by the Austrian gunners. We went off one by one, and by a circuitous march reached the rear of the little wood, where we re-formed our section. Young Pertelay put himself at our head; we passed through the wood and dashed, sabre in hand, on the enemy's battery, just as it was pouring a terrible fire upon our troops. We sabred some of the gunners, the remainder hid under the ammunition wagons, where our swords could not reach them.

Pertelay's instructions were neither to kill nor wound the

drivers, but to force them at the sword's point to push their horses on and to draw the guns as far as the French line. This order was satisfactorily carried out with regard to six pieces, the drivers remaining mounted and following our injunctions. But those of the other two guns, whether through fright or determination, dismounted from their horses. The hussars might pull the animals by the bridles as they would, they could not be got to move. The nearest battalions of the enemy were coming up at the double to support their battery; minutes were like hours for us. At length Pertelay, satisfied with having captured six guns, gave orders to abandon the others and to gallop in with those we had taken upon our own army. Prudent as this step was, it proved fatal to our gallant leader; for hardly had we begun our retreat when the gunners and their officers, emerging from below the ammunition wagons which had protected them from our swords, loaded with canister the two guns which we had not been able to carry off, and sent a hail of missiles into our backs.

You can imagine that thirty troopers, six guns harnessed each to six horses and driven by three drivers, marching in loose order, presents a wide surface, so nearly every missile told. We had two sergeants and several troopers killed or wounded, and one or two of the drivers; several horses, also, were disabled—so much so that the greater number of the teams were thrown into disorder and could get no farther. Pertelay, with the most perfect coolness, gave orders to cut the traces of the killed and disabled horses, to replace the killed and wounded drivers by hussars, and to go forward as fast as we could; but the few minutes which we lost in carrying out this order had been utilised by the commander of the Austrian battery. He let us have a second volley of canister, which caused us fresh losses; but our blood was up and we were resolved not to abandon the six guns which we had captured; we again succeeded in patching everything up as well as we could and in resuming our march. We were almost touching the French line, and were beyond the range of canister, when our enemy changed his projectile and sent two round-shots at us, one of which broke poor Pertelay's back.

Meanwhile, our attack on the Austrian battery and its result had been perceived by the French army and the generals ordered the lines to advance. The enemy recoiled, which allowed the remains of our detachment to return to the ground where our poor comrades had fallen. Nearly a third of the number had been killed or wounded. At the beginning of

the action there had been five non-commissioned officers; three had perished; there remained only the elder Pertelay and myself. He, poor fellow, had been wounded, and was in still greater pain of mind than of body, for he adored his brother; and we also keenly regretted him. While we were doing the last duties by him and removing the wounded, General Championnet came up with General Suchet, his chief of the staff. The commander-in-chief had seen the exploit of our battalion. He called us together beside the six guns which we had just taken and gave us the greatest praise for the courage with which we had succeeded in ridding the army of a battery that had been causing great damage. He added that in order to reward us for having thus saved a great number of lives and contributed to the success of the day, he wished to use the power given to him by a recent decree of the First Consul instituting arms of honour, and that he granted to the detachment three swords of honour and a sub-lieutenancy, authorizing us at the same time ourselves to name those who should receive these rewards. More keenly did we then regret the loss of the younger Pertelay, so well fitted to be an officer. The swords of honour, which three years later entitled their wearers to the Cross of the Legion of Honour, fell to the elder Pertelay, a corporal, and a trooper. Then came the naming of the one of us who was to have a sub-lieutenancy; all my comrades pronounced my name, and the commander-in-chief, remembering what General Séras had written to him about my conduct at San Giacomo, appointed me sub-lieutenant. I had only been sergeant a month. At the same time I must admit that in the attack and capture of the guns I had done no more than my comrades; but, as I have already said, none of these worthy Alsatians felt himself fit to command as an officer, so they unanimously named me, and the commander-in-chief was kind enough to take account of the proposal in my favour which General Séras had made. I may say, too, that possibly he was glad to do what would please my father. At all events this was the view that my father took of my rapid promotion, for, as soon as he heard of it, he wrote forbidding me to accept it. I obeyed, but as he had written to the same effect to General Suchet, the chief of the staff, and the latter had answered that the commander-in-chief would certainly be hurt if one of his divisional generals claimed to disapprove a nomination which he had made in virtue of powers conferred on him by the Government, my father permitted me to accept, and I was gazetted sub-lieutenant on the 10th Nivose, year 7 (December 1799).

I was one of the last officers promoted by General Championnet. Being unable to hold his position in Piedmont in presence of a superior force, he was compelled to retreat across the Apennines and bring the army back into Liguria. Such was his grief at seeing a portion of his troops disbanded because he was no longer given the means of provisioning, that he died on the 25th of Nivose, fifteen days after he had made me an officer. My father, being the senior general of division, became provisionally commander-in-chief of the Army of Italy, with his head-quarters at Nice. He returned thither, and with all haste sent back into Provence what little cavalry still remained, for there was no longer any store of forage in Liguria. The 1st Hussars therefore returned to France, but my father kept me with him to act as aide-de-camp.

During our stay at Nice my father received orders from the Ministry of War to take up the command of the advanced guard of the Army of the Rhine, whither Colonel Ménard, as his chief of the staff, was to follow him. We were all very much satisfied with this new post, for the Army of Italy had become so demoralised by want of supplies that it seemed impossible to maintain our position in Liguria. Nor was my father sorry to get away from an army that was breaking up, and seemed about to tarnish its laurels by a shameful retreat, the result of which would be to throw it back behind the Var. He made ready, therefore, to depart as soon as General Masséna should arrive to replace him, and he sent M. Gault to Paris in order to buy maps and make the necessary preparations for our campaign on the Rhine. But destiny had decided otherwise, and my poor father's grave was marked out on the soil of Italy.

Masséna arrived to find but the shadow of an army. The troops, unpaid, almost unclad and unshod, were receiving only quarter rations, and dying of starvation or epidemic sickness, the result of privations. The hospitals were full, and medicine was lacking. Bands of soldiers, even whole regiments, were every day quitting their posts and making for the bridge over the Var. They forced their way into France, and scattered about Provence, declaring themselves ready to return to their duty if they were fed. The generals had no power against such a mass of misery; every day their discouragement grew, and they were all asking for leave or resigning on the ground of illness. Masséna had, indeed, hoped to be joined in Italy by several of the generals who had been taking part in the defeat of the Russians in Switzerland: among them by Soult,

Oudinot, and Gazan. But none of these had as yet come, and the pressing need must be met.

Masséna, who was born at Turbia, a township in the little principality of Monaco, was the wiliest of Italians. He was not acquainted with my father, but at first sight he judged him to be a man of magnanimous nature, above all things patriotic. In order to get him to stay, therefore, he approached him on his most sensitive side, appealing to his generosity and love of his country, and pointing out how much more to his honour it would be to stay with the Army of Italy in its misfortunes than to go to the Rhine where things were prosperous. He offered, moreover, if my father would stay, to take upon himself all responsibility for his neglect of orders. My father was over-persuaded, and, not liking to leave the new commander-in-chief while things were in confusion, agreed to stay. He made no doubt that Colonel Ménard, his friend, and chief of the staff, would follow his example and decline to serve on the Rhine; but here he was mistaken. Colonel Ménard, though assured that there would be no difficulty in getting the order revoked, held himself bound to obey it, and lost no time in reaching Paris, where he obtained the post of chief of the staff to General Lefebvre. My father felt his defection keenly. The post he had held was filled by Colonel Sacleux, an excellent man and good soldier, of a kindly but grave and serious disposition. His secretary was a young man named Colindo, son of one Trepano, a banker at Parma, who became an excellent friend of mine. Spire was left at Nice with the bulk of the baggage, and my father repaired to Genoa, to take up the command of the three divisions composing the left wing. He lodged in the Centurione Palace till the end of the winter 1799-1800.

At the beginning of the following spring my father learnt that Masséna had given the command of the right wing to Soult, who had just arrived. At the same time he received orders to return to Savona and resume the command of his old division, the third. Though sorely hurt at this supersession by an officer much his junior, he complied with the new arrangements.

Meanwhile great events were preparing in Italy. Masséna had received reinforcements, and re-established some measure of order in the army. The famous campaign of 1800, which led to the siege of Genoa and the battle of Marengo, was about to open.

CHAPTER IX.

As soon as the snow had melted on the mountains which lay between the two armies, the Austrians attacked. Their first efforts were directed against the third division of the right wing with the view of separating it from the centre and the left and hurling it back on Genoa. At the commencement of hostilities my father and Colonel Sacleux sent all non-combatants to that city, Colindo among the number. For my part, I was over head and ears in happiness. The animating sight of troops on the march, the clatter of artillery movements, roused the desire which is always in a young soldier's heart of taking part in warlike operations. I was far from suspecting how terrible a war this would be, and how costly to myself.

My father's division, briskly attacked by a superior force, held for two days the famous position of Cadibone and Montenotte; but finally, being in danger of having its flank turned, it was forced to retreat on Voltri, and then on Genoa, where, with the other two divisions of the right wing, it was shut up.

I could hear the generals who knew the state of the case deploring the necessity of separating ourselves from the centre and the left wing, but at that time I knew so little of the principles of war that it in no way affected me. I understood well enough that we had been beaten, but as I had with my own hand captured an officer of the Barco Hussars and fastened his plume with much pride to the headstall of my horse, I felt as if this trophy gave me some resemblance to a knight of the Middle Ages coming home laden with the spoils of the infidels. My boyish vanity was soon brought down by a terrible catastrophe. During the retreat, just as my father was giving me an order to carry, he received a ball in the left leg, the leg in which he had before been wounded with the Army of the Pyrenees. The shock was so great that he must have fallen from his horse if he had not leant upon me. I got him away from the field of battle; his wound was dressed, and when I saw his blood flow I began to cry. He tried to soothe

me, and said that a soldier ought to have stronger nerves. We carried him to Genoa and placed him in the Centurione Palace, which he had occupied in the previous winter. Our three divisions entered Genoa; the Austrians blockaded the place by land, and the English by sea.

The courage fails me to describe what the garrison and population of Genoa had to suffer during the two months which this memorable siege lasted. The ravages of famine, war, typhus were enormous. Out of 16,000 men, the garrison lost 10,000; every day seven or eight hundred corpses of the inhabitants, of every age, sex, and class, were picked up in the streets and buried in an immense trench filled with quicklime behind the church of Carignan. The number of victims reached more than 30,000, nearly all starved to death.

In order to realise to what extent the dearth of food was felt among the inhabitants, you must know that the old Genoese Government, to keep the population in check, had from time immemorial claimed a monopoly of grain, flour, and bread. The bread was baked in an immense building guarded by cannon and soldiers, so that whenever the Doge or the Senate wished to prevent or punish a revolt they had only to close the state bakeries and subdue the people by famine. Although at the time of which I speak the Genoese Constitution had undergone much change, and the aristocracy had lost nearly all its authority, there still was not a single private bakehouse, and the old custom of making the bread in the state ovens continued. Well, these public ovens, which habitually provided food for a population of more than 120,000 souls, remained closed for forty-five days out of the sixty which the siege lasted. Rich no more than poor had the means of obtaining bread; the small quantity of dried vegetables and rice which was in the hands of the dealers had been bought up at enormous prices at the very beginning of the siege. The troops alone received a miserable ration of a quarter of a pound of horseflesh and a quarter of a pound of what was called bread—a horrible compound of damaged flour, sawdust, starch, hair powder, oatmeal, linseed, rancid nuts, and other nasty substances, to which a little solidity was given by the admixture of a small portion of cocoa. Each loaf, moreover, was held together by little bits of wood, without which it would have fallen to powder. General Thiébault in his journal of the siege compares this bread to peat mingled with oil.

For five-and-forty days neither bread nor meat was publicly

sold; the richest inhabitants were able, but only during the first part of the siege, to obtain a little codfish, figs, and other dried provisions, as well as some sugar. Oil, wine, and salt never failed; but of what use are these without solid food? All the dogs and cats in the town were eaten; rats fetched a high price. At length the misery grew so terrible that whenever the French troops made a sortie crowds followed them outside the gates, and there rich and poor, women, children, and old men, set to work to cut grass, nettles, and leaves, which they then boiled with salt. The Genoese Government had the grass which grew on the ramparts mown, and afterwards cooked in the public squares and distributed to the sick people who were not strong enough to get this coarse food and cook it themselves. Our troops used to boil nettles and all kinds of plants with their horseflesh; the richest and most eminent families envied them their meat, disgusting as it was—for nearly all the horses were ill for want of forage, and the flesh even of those which had died of consumption was distributed. During the latter part of the siege the exasperation of the Genoese populace became a serious danger. They were heard to exclaim that in 1746 their fathers had massacred an Austrian army, and that they ought to try to get rid of the French army in the same way. Decidedly it was better worth while to die fighting than to see their wives and children succumb and then starve themselves. These symptoms of revolt were the more terrible in that if they had come to anything the English and the Austrians would undoubtedly have hastened to join the insurgents in the effort to overwhelm us.

In the middle of dangers so imminent and calamities so various, Masséna remained impassible and calm. To prevent any attempt at a rising, he proclaimed that the French troops had orders to fire on any assemblage of the inhabitants which amounted to more than four men. Our regiments continually bivouacked in the squares and in the principal streets, the approaches to which were defended by guns loaded with canister; and the Genoese, being unable to assemble, found it impossible to rise.

It may seem surprising that Masséna should have clung so obstinately to the defence of a place of which he could maintain the garrison with difficulty, and the population not at all. But Genoa weighed heavily just then in the balance of the fate of France. Our army was cut in two; the left and centre had retired behind the Var; while Masséna, shut up in Genoa, detained a portion of the Austrian army before that place,

and thus prevented it from invading Provence in full force. Masséna knew that at Dijon, at Lyons, and at Geneva the First Consul was collecting a reserve army with which he proposed to cross the Alps by the Great St. Bernard, to enter Italy, and to surprise the Austrians by falling on their rear while they were occupied with the siege of Genoa. It was, therefore, of immense importance to us to hold that town as long as possible. The First Consul had given orders to that effect, and his foresight was justified by events. But let me return to what befell me in the siege.

On learning that my father had been brought wounded into Genoa, Colindo Trepano hastened to his bedside, and we met again there. He helped me in the most affectionate way to tend the sick man; and I was the more grateful to him that in the midst of our troubles my father had no one with him. All staff officers had received orders to place themselves at the service of the commander-in-chief. Very soon provisions were no longer allowed to our servants: and they were compelled to take a musket and enroll themselves among the combatants, in order to claim the wretched ration which was distributed to the soldiers. The only exceptions were made in favour of a young valet named Oudin and a young groom who looked after our horses; but Oudin left us on learning that my father had been seized with typhus. This terrible disorder, like the plague, with which it has much affinity, always attacks the wounded and those who are already ill. My father took it; and just when he most needed care he had no one with him but myself, Colindo, and the groom Bastide. We carried out the doctor's prescriptions to the best of our power, and got no sleep day or night, being incessantly occupied in rubbing my father with camphorated oil, and in changing bedclothes and bandages. He could take nothing but broth, and to make this we had only bad horseflesh. My heart sank within me. Providence, however, sent us some aid. The great buildings of the public bakeries were close to the walls of the palace in which we lived; their terraces were almost in contact. That of the bakeries was very spacious; the crushing and mixing of the various grains which were added to the damaged flour to make bread for the garrison was carried on there. Bastide, the groom, had observed that when the workmen of the bakehouse had left the terrace it was invaded by swarms of pigeons, which had their nests in the various towers of the city and came thither to pick up what few grains might have been let fall in sifting. Being a man of intelligence, he

contrived to cross the short space which separated this from our terrace, and on it set traps of various kinds wherewith he took the pigeons. Of these we made my father a broth which he found excellent in comparison with that made from horse. To the horrors of famine and pestilence were added those of obstinate and incessant warfare; for all day long the French troops were fighting on the land side against the Austrians, and when night put a stop to this, the English, Turkish, and Neapolitan fleets, sheltered by the darkness from the fire of the harbour batteries, poured enormous quantities of shells into the town, doing terrible damage. Thus we had not an instant of repose.

The noise of the cannonade and the cries of the dying reached my father's room, and agitated him extremely. He kept regretting that he could not be at the head of his division; and his mental state made his bodily condition worse. From day to day his illness grew more serious, and he became visibly weaker. Colindo and I never left him for an instant. At last, one night, while I was kneeling by his bedside bathing his wound, he spoke to me with his mind perfectly clear. Then, feeling his end approaching, he laid his hand on my head, stroked it caressingly, and said: 'Poor child! what is to become of you with no one to look after you, in the midst of the horrors of this terrible siege?' He murmured a few words, among which I made out my mother's name, dropped his arms, and closed his eyes.

Young as I was, and short as had been my service, I had seen plenty of men die in the field, and still more in the streets of Genoa; but these had fallen in the open air and in their clothes. Very different is the sight of a man dying in bed; and this last sad spectacle I had never yet witnessed. I thought, therefore, that my father had dropped off to sleep. Colindo, who understood the truth, had not the heart to tell me, and I was only undeceived some hours later, when M. Lachèze came in and I saw him draw the sheet over my father's face, saying, 'A terrible loss for his family and his friends.' Then, for the first time, I realised my full misfortune. My grief was so heartrending that it even touched the commander-in-chief, Masséna, who was not very easily moved, especially in circumstances like the present, where firmness was so much required. The critical position of affairs caused him to take in regard to me a step which I thought atrocious, though if I ever commanded in a besieged town I should do the same myself. In order to avoid anything

which might weaken the *moral* of the troops Masséna had forbidden all funeral processions. He knew that I was unwilling to quit the mortal remains of my dear father, and suspected that my intention was to accompany them to the grave. Fearing the effect on the troops of seeing a young officer, little more than a child, sobbing behind the bier of his father, a general of division, and a victim of this terrible war, Masséna came the next morning before daybreak into the room where my father was lying, and, taking me by the hand, led me under some pretext into a distant apartment. Meanwhile, at his orders, twelve grenadiers, accompanied only by Colonel Sacleux and another officer, took up the bier in silence and carried it off to the temporary grave on the ramparts towards the sea. Not till this sad ceremony was over did Masséna tell me what had been done, explaining the motives of his decision. I cannot express the despair into which I was thrown. It seemed to me that by this removal of my father's body without the last cares from me I had lost him a second time. It was no use complaining, and there was nothing more for me to do but to go and pray at his grave. I did not know where it was, but my friend Colindo had followed the funeral at a little distance, and he took me there. This kind young fellow gave me at this time proofs of a touching sympathy at a moment when everyone was thinking of nothing but his personal position.

Almost all the officers on my father's staff had been killed or carried off by typhus ; we were eleven before the campaign, and there remained only two of us, Major R—— and myself. But R—— thought only about himself, and, instead of being any help to his general's son, he continued to live by himself in the town ; M. Lachèze also left me to myself. Only the kind Colonel Sacleux showed any signs of interest in me, but as the commander-in-chief had given him the command of a brigade, he was constantly engaged in repelling the enemy outside the walls. I remained, therefore, alone in the vast Centurione Palace with Colindo, Bastide, and the old porter.

Scarcely a week had passed since I had lost my father when General Masséna, who wanted a great many officers about him, for he got some killed or wounded almost every day, sent me orders to come and act as his aide-de-camp. R—— and all the officers of generals who were killed or disabled from riding were doing the like ; I obeyed, and all day long attended the commander-in-chief during the fighting. When I was not kept at head-quarters I went home, and when

night came Colindo and I, passing through dying and dead, through women and children who were lying about the streets, used to go and pray at my father's tomb.

Meanwhile famine was increasing to an alarming extent. By order of the commander-in-chief each officer was allowed to retain only one horse; all the rest had to be sent to the butcher. My father had left several, and it would have been very painful to me to know that the poor beasts were going to be killed. I saved their lives by proposing to the staff officers to exchange them for their broken-down animals, and gave these over to the butcher. Later on, the state paid for these horses on presentation of the order to give them up. I preserved one of these orders as a curious relic; it bears the signature of General Oudinot, chief of the staff to Masséna.

The cruel loss which I had undergone, the position in which I found myself, and the terrible scenes at which I was every day present, had in a short time developed my intelligence more than many years of happiness would have done. I understood that all those who a few months before had been surrounding my father with attentions were rendered selfish by the misery of the siege, and that I must find in myself courage and resource enough, not only for my own needs, but to support Colindo and Bastide. The chief thing was to find the means of feeding them, since they got no provision from the army stores. I had, indeed, as an officer double rations of horseflesh and bread; but all this together only made a pound of nourishment, and that very bad, and there were three of us. We very seldom now caught any pigeons, for their number had greatly diminished. As aide-de-camp to the commander-in-chief I had my place laid at his table, where once a day bread, roast horse, and dried peas were served; but I was so angry with Masséna for having deprived me of the sad consolation of following my father to the grave that I could not make up my mind to take my place at his table, although all my comrades were there, and he had given me a general invitation. Ultimately, however, the desire of aiding my two unfortunate fellow-lodgers decided me to take my meals with the general. After that Colindo and Bastide each got a quarter of a pound of bread and the same amount of horseflesh. I did not myself get enough to eat, for at the general's table the portions were extremely minute, and I was very hard-worked. I often found my strength failing, and more than once it happened to me to be obliged to lie down on the ground to save myself from fainting.

Once more Providence came to our aid. Bastide was a

native of the Cantal, and in the previous winter had come across another Auvergnat of his acquaintance who was settled at Genoa as a small tradesman. He went to see him, and was struck on entering the house by a smell like that of a grocer's shop. He remarked upon it to his friend, saying, 'You have got provisions!' The other admitted it, binding him to secrecy, for every kind of provisions found in private houses were carried off to the army stores. The sensible Bastide offered to find him a purchaser for any superfluous provisions who would pay in cash and keep his secret, and came to let me know of his discovery. My father had left several thousand francs, so I bought and had brought to the house at night a good store of cod, cheese, figs, sugar, chocolate, and so on. All this was horribly dear; the Auvergnat got nearly all my money, but I deemed myself only too happy in letting him do what he liked with me, for according to what I heard every day at head-quarters the siege was going to last a good deal longer, and the famine to go on increasing, which, unhappily, came true. What doubled my joy in getting means of subsistence was the thought that I was saving the life of my friend Colindo, who but for this would literally have starved to death, for he knew no one in the army except me and Colonel Sacleux.

Before very long the colonel met with a terrible disaster under the following circumstances: Masséna, attacked on every side, and seeing his troops mowed down by constant famine and by fighting, and being obliged at the same time to keep in check an immense population driven by hunger to despair, found his position most critical. Knowing that if he was to maintain any order in his army he must establish an iron discipline, he cashiered without pity every officer who did not execute his orders precisely in virtue of the power which the law at that time conferred on commanders-in-chief. Many examples of this kind had already been made. One day, in a sortie which we pushed to a distance of six leagues from the town, the brigade commanded by Colonel Sacleux failed to be at the appointed hour in a valley where it was to have barred the Austrians' passage. Consequently they escaped, and the commander-in-chief, furious at seeing his combination fail, cashiered poor Colonel Sacleux, and announced it in a general order. It was quite possible that Sacleux had not understood what was expected of him, but there was no doubt about his courage. He would in his despair have certainly blown his brains out if his heart had not been set on gaining

back his honour. He took a musket and placed himself in the ranks as a soldier. One day he came to visit us; Colindo and I were touched to the heart at seeing this excellent man in a private's uniform. We bade farewell to Sacleux, who, after the surrender of the place, was restored by the First Consul to his rank of colonel at the instance of Masséna himself, Sacleux having by his courage compelled him to reconsider his decision. But in the following year, seeing that peace was made in Europe, and wishing to free himself completely from the slur which had been so unjustly cast upon him, Sacleux asked leave to go and fight in San Domingo, and there was killed just as he was about to be appointed brigadier-general. There are some men with whom in spite of their merit destiny deals very hardly; he was one of them.

CHAPTER X.

I CAN only speak very briefly of the operations of the siege, or rather blockade, which we sustained. At this period the fortifications of Genoa consisted on the land side merely of a wall flanked with towers; but what rendered the place capable of a good defence was the fact of its being surrounded at a short distance by hills whose summits and slopes were covered with forts and redoubts. The Austrians were always attacking these positions; as soon as they carried one we marched to retake it; the next day they tried again to get possession of it. If they succeeded we went to drive them out afresh—in short, it was a perpetual see-saw with varying chances, but on the whole we ended by remaining masters of the ground. These fights were often very brisk; in one of them General Soult, who was Masséna's right-hand man, was climbing Monte Corona at the head of his columns to recapture the fort of the same name which we had lost the day before, when a bullet smashed his knee just as the enemy, far outnumbering us, were charging down from the top of the hill. It was impossible with the few troops which we had at this point to resist such a torrent, and we had to beat a retreat. The soldiers carried Soult for some time on their muskets, but the intolerable pain compelled him to order them to set him down at the foot of a tree, where his brother and one of his aides-de-camp remained alone with him to defend him from the fury of the first of the enemy who should reach him. Luckily, among these were some officers, who treated their illustrious prisoner with much respect. The capture of General Soult having stimulated the ardour of the Austrians, they drove us very smartly back to the wall, and were preparing to assault this, when a tremendous storm darkened the blue sky which we had had since the beginning of the siege. The rain fell in torrents. The Austrians halted, and the greater number of them sought shelter in cottages or under trees. Then Masséna, whose principal merit in war lay in profiting by all sorts of unfore-

seen circumstances, addressed his soldiers, rekindled their ardour, and, supporting them with troops brought up from the town, ordered a bayonet-charge, and led them, while the storm was at its height, against the Austrians; who, victorious so far, were taken aback by this audacity, and retired in disorder. Masséna pursued with such vigour that he cut off a force of 3,000 grenadiers, who laid down their arms.

This was not the first time that we had taken a good many prisoners. The total number of those captured since the beginning of the siege amounted to more than eight thousand; but, having no means of feeding them, the general had always sent them back on condition that they should not serve against us for six months. The officers kept their parole faithfully; but the unlucky soldiers, who did not know what their chiefs had undertaken on their behalf, were, on their return to the Austrian camp, distributed among other regiments, and compelled to fight again. If they again fell into our hands, which often happened, we gave them back again; they were again passed into other battalions, and so it happened that a great many men on their own admission were taken prisoners four or five times during the siege. Angry at this bad faith on the part of the Austrian generals, Masséna determined this time that the three thousand whom he had captured should be detained, officers and men. But in order that the task of guarding them should not be an additional duty for the troops, he placed the unhappy prisoners on board hulks in the harbour, and had some of the guns on the mole trained upon them. Then he sent a flag of truce to General Ott, commanding the Austrian troops before Genoa, to reproach him for his breach of good faith, and let him know that he did not feel bound to give the prisoners more than half the ration of a French soldier, but that he would agree to an arrangement between the Austrians and the English under which boats should bring provisions every day to the prisoners, and not leave them till they had seen the food eaten, lest it should be believed that he, Masséna, was availing himself of this pretext to get provisions in for his own troops. The Austrian general, in the hope that a refusal would induce Masséna to send back his three thousand men, of whom he probably thought again to make use against us, withheld his consent to this philanthropic proposal; so Masséna carried out his declared intention.

The ration of the French was composed of a quarter of a

pound of horrible bread and an equal quantity of horseflesh; so the prisoners got only half that quantity of each commodity. The siege lasted fifteen days longer, and the poor wretches remained all that time on this diet. In vain did Masséna every two or three days renew his proposal. Either from obstinacy or because the English admiral, Lord Keith, was unwilling to supply boats for fear of introducing typhus into his fleet, it was never accepted. The unhappy Austrians were yelling with rage and hunger on board the hulks; at last, after having eaten their shoes, knapsacks, pouches, and even, according to rumour, the bodies of some of their comrades, they nearly all died of starvation. There remained no more than 700 or 800 when the place was surrendered. As soon as the Austrian soldiers entered Genoa, they hastened to the harbour and supplied food to their comrades, but with so little judgment that all the survivors died. I have thought fit to relate this horrible incident not only as a further example of the calamities which war brings in its train, but more especially to brand the bad faith of the Austrian general in compelling his soldiers who had been made prisoners and sent back on parole again to bear arms against us in spite of his undertaking to send them back to Germany.

Of my own perils during the siege I will confine myself to recounting the two principal. I have already said that the Austrians and the English took it in turns to keep us constantly on the alert. The former attacked us at daybreak on the land-side, fought us all day long, and returned to rest at night. During the night Lord Keith's fleet came and bombarded us, trying under cover of darkness to get possession of the port, and thus forcing the garrison to watch that side most carefully, and preventing them from getting the least rest. One night when the bombardment was more than ordinarily violent, Masséna, having been informed that, by the help of some Bengal lights which had been fired on the beach, many English craft, laden with troops, could be seen advancing towards the moles, mounted with all his staff and his regular escort of guides. We were in all some 150 to 200 horsemen. As we passed a little square named the Campetto, the commander-in-chief halted to speak to an officer who was returning from the port. All were thronging round him, when a cry was heard, 'Look out! a shell!' We all looked up and beheld a vast mass of red-hot iron descending on the group of men and horses who were packed in the narrow space. I happened to be close to the wall of a great house, above the door of which

was a marble balcony. I urged my horse under this and several of my neighbours did the same. Precisely on this balcony the shell dropped; it smashed it to pieces, bounded off on to the pavement, and burst with a tremendous noise in the middle of the square, which for a moment was lighted up by the flash and then relapsed into deeper darkness. We thought the loss would have been great; the profound silence was broken by the voice of General Masséna asking if anyone was wounded; there was no answer, for by a really miraculous chance not one of the fragments of the shell had struck a man or a horse in the crowd. As for those who, like myself, were under the balcony, they were covered with dust and fragments of building materials, but no one was wounded.

I have said that as a rule the English only bombarded us at night; but one day when they were celebrating some festival or other, their fleet, dressed with flags, sailed up to the town in the middle of the day, and amused itself by showering projectiles on us. The one of our batteries which was in the best position for replying to this fire was near the mole, on a great tower-like bastion called the Lantern. The commander-in-chief ordered me to carry to the officer commanding this battery instructions to take good aim before firing, and to let all his fire converge upon an English brig which had impudently anchored a short distance from the Lantern. Our gunners aimed so well that one of our 500-lb. shells dropped on the English brig, smashing through from deck to keel and sinking it instantly.[1] This enraged the English admiral so much that he ordered all his gunboats to advance upon the Lantern, on which they opened a furious fire. Having fulfilled my orders, my duty was to return to Masséna; but, as is often and rightly said, young soldiers, not realising danger, frequently face it more coolly than experienced veterans. The spectacle which I witnessed was highly interesting; the platform of the Lantern, paved with flagstones, was about the area of an average courtyard, and was armed with twelve pieces of ordnance, the carriages of which were of great size. Difficult as it is for a vessel at sea to throw shells with accuracy at so small a mark as the platform of a tower, the English contrived to drop several on the Lantern. At the moments when they fell the gunners took refuge behind and

[1] [In the list given by James, of British ships lost during 1800, there is no mention of any at Genoa. The story told here bears a certain resemblance to that of the apocryphal destruction of another English brig off Boulogne. See below, p. 125.]

beneath the massive wooden carriages. I followed their example, but our refuge was by no means secure, since the shells, being unable to break through the floor of the platform, rolled along the flags without our being able to foresee what direction they would take, and their fragments, spinning about from every point of the platform, flew beneath and behind the gun-carriages. It was, therefore, absurd for anyone to stay there, who, like me, was not obliged to do so; but I felt a fearful joy, if I may use the term, in rushing with the gunners to cover every time that a shell fell, and in returning with them as soon as it had burst and the fragments no longer flew. It was a sport for which I might have paid dear. One gunner had his legs broken; others were severely wounded, for the huge fragments of iron did frightful execution. One of them cut in two a great timber of one of the carriages behind which I was just going to take shelter. In spite of it, I stayed on the platform until Colonel Mouton (in later days Marshal Count of Lobau), who had served under my father and took an interest in me, happened to pass near the Lantern, and ordered me peremptorily to come away and go back to my post with the commander-in-chief. 'You are a young fellow still,' he added, 'but you must learn that in war it is foolish to expose oneself to needless dangers. What good would it have done you if you had had a leg smashed, without any advantage to your country?' I never forgot this lesson, and long after thanked the Count of Lobau for it. It has often struck me what a difference there would have been in my fortunes if I had lost a leg at the age of seventeen.

CHAPTER XI.

The obstinate courage with which Masséna had held Genoa had important consequences. Major Franceschi, sent by him to the First Consul, succeeded, both going and returning, in passing through the enemy's fleet at night undetected. He was back at Genoa on the 6th Prairial with the news that he had left Bonaparte descending from the Great St. Bernard at the head of his reserve force. Field-marshal Melas was so convinced of the impossibility of bringing such an army across the Alps, that while the force under General Ott was blockading us he had gone with the rest of his army to attack General Suchet on the Var, fifty leagues away, with the intention of invading Provence. This allowed the First Consul to enter Italy unopposed, so that the army of reserve was at Milan before the Austrians had begun to believe in its existence. Thus the resistance of Genoa had effected a powerful diversion in aid of France. Once in Italy, Bonaparte's first wish would have been to succour the valiant garrison of that town ; but in order to do this he had to wait until his whole force was assembled, and the passage of the Alps offered great difficulties to the artillery and commissariat wagons. This delay allowed time for Melas to hasten up with the bulk of his forces from Nice to oppose the First Consul, who was thus unable to continue his march upon Genoa except by previously defeating the Austrian army.

But while Bonaparte and Melas were marching and countermarching in Piedmont and the province of Milan previously to the battle which was to decide the fate of Italy and France, the garrison of Genoa was at the last gasp. Typhus was doing frightful execution ; the hospitals were charnel-houses ; the measure of misery was full. Nearly all the horses had been eaten, and the half-pound of wretched food, which was all that the troops had for some time received, was never secure for one day in advance. *Absolutely nothing* was left when, on the 15th Prairial, the commander-in-chief summoned all the generals and colonels, and announced that

he had determined to take such sound men as remained and try to cut his way through and reach Leghorn. The officers, however, declared with one voice that the troops were utterly unfit to fight, even to march, without a sufficient meal to sustain their strength before starting. The stores were completely exhausted. So Masséna, deeming that by facilitating the entry of the First Consul into Italy he had carried out his instructions, and that it was now his duty to save the fragments of a garrison which had fought so valiantly, and which, in the interests of the country, ought to be preserved, finally decided to offer terms for the evacuation of the place. He would not hear of *capitulation*.

For more than a month past the English admiral and General Ott had been proposing an interview, but Masséna had always refused. Now, however, he was constrained by the circumstances to send them word that he agreed to it. The meeting took place in a little chapel which stands on the bridge of Conegliano, and was situated between the sea and the French and Austrian outposts. The French, Austrian, and English staffs took their stand at the ends of the bridge. I was present at this most interesting scene. The enemy's commander showed special marks of esteem and respect to Masséna. Although the conditions which he required were unfavourable to them, Lord Keith said repeatedly: 'General, your defence has been so heroic that we can refuse you nothing.' It was agreed, therefore, that the garrison should not be prisoners, should retain their arms, and should proceed to Nice. As soon as they had reached that town they were free to take part again in hostilities.

Masséna well understood how important it was that the keen desire which the First Consul must be feeling to come to the aid of Genoa should not lead him into any movement which might compromise his safety. He demanded, therefore, that the conditions should include a safe-conduct through the Austrian army for two officers who were to bear to him the news of the evacuation of the place by the French troops. General Ott objected, having in view a speedy departure to join Melas with 25,000 envoys of the blockading force, and he did not wish that warning of this should be brought to the First Consul by Masséna's troops. But Lord Keith overruled this objection. The treaty was on the point of being signed when sounds as of distant cannon were heard far away among the mountains. Masséna put down his pen, exclaiming, 'There comes the First Consul with his army!' The

hostile generals were amazed ; but after waiting some time it became evident that the sound was that of thunder, and Masséna decided to sign.

The loss to the garrison and its commander of the full credit of holding Genoa till the First Consul could come up was not the only source of regret; Masséna would have been glad to hold out a few days longer, and by so much to delay the departure of General Ott's force. He clearly foresaw that this general would march to join Field-marshal Melas, and thereby afford him valuable help in meeting the First Consul. His fear, though well founded, was unnecessary, for Ott was not able to effect a junction with the main Austrian army till the day after Marengo. The result of that battle would have been very different if the Austrians, whom we had so much trouble to beat as it was, had had another 25,000 men to bring against us. Thus Masséna's defence of Genoa had not only kept the Alps open for Bonaparte, and given Milan into his hands, but had also kept 25,000 men out of his way on the day of Marengo.

On the 16th Prairial the Austrians took possession of Genoa, after a siege of just two months.

So important did our commander-in-chief deem it that the First Consul should have timely notice of the treaty just concluded, that he had asked for a safe-conduct for two aides-de-camp, in order that if one fell ill the other might take on the despatch. It was as well that the officer to whom the duty was entrusted should be able to speak Italian, so Masséna selected for it Major Graziani, a Piedmontese or Roman in the French service. With his wonted excess of suspicion, however, fearing that one who was not a Frenchman might be tampered with by the Austrians and induced to delay, he attached me to him, with special instructions to urge him forward till we fell in with the First Consul. There was really no need for this for M. Graziani was perfectly loyal, and thoroughly understood the importance of his errand. We started on the 16th Prairial, and came up with Bonaparte the next evening at Milan.

General Bonaparte spoke with much sympathy of my recent loss, and promised if I behaved well to act a father's part to me. He kept his word. He was never tired of questioning M. Graziani and me both as to what had happened at Genoa and about the strength and direction of the Austrian forces which we had passed on our way to Milan. He kept us near him, and lent us horses from his

stable. We had performed the journey on post-mules. We accompanied him to Montebello, and on to the battlefield of Marengo, where we were his orderly officers. I will not enter into the details of this memorable fight, in which no harm befell me. As is well known, we were on the verge of defeat, and should probably have been defeated if Ott's 25,000 men had come up before the end of the battle. The First Consul, fearing that they would appear every moment, was very anxious, and only recovered his spirits when our infantry and the cavalry of Desaix (whose death he only learnt later) had decided the victory by repulsing Zach's column of grenadiers. Just then, noticing that the horse which I rode was slightly wounded in the leg, he took me by the ear and said, laughing, 'You expect me to lend you my horses for you to treat them in that way?' As Major Graziani died in 1812, I am the only French officer who was present both at the siege of Genoa and at the battle of Marengo.

After the battle I returned to Genoa, which the Austrians were compelled, by the treaty made as a result of our victory, to evacuate. I met again Colindo and Major R——, visited the grave of my father, and we embarked on board a French brig, which brought us to Nice in twenty-four hours. A few days later a Leghorn vessel brought Colindo's mother, who came to look after her son. This excellent young man and I had had our friendship cemented by the severe trials which we had gone through together; but our destinies lay apart, and with keen regret we had to separate.

As I mentioned above, Masséna's aide-de-camp, Franceschi, bearing despatches to the First Consul, had passed through the English fleet at night and succeeded in reaching France. He brought the news of my father's death. On receiving this my mother had had administrators of his estate[1] appointed, and they had sent orders to old Spire, who had remained at Nice with my father's travelling outfit, to sell everything and return at once to Paris. This having been done, I had nothing to keep me on the banks of the Var, and was eager to rejoin my mother—not an easy thing to do, for there were few public conveyances then. The coach from Nice to Lyons went only every other day, and all the places were taken weeks in advance for the crowd of sick and wounded officers coming

[1] [Probably the nearest English approach to *conseil de tutelle*. These, however, would also have personal authority over the children.]

also from Genoa. To get out of this difficulty, Major R——, two colonels, a dozen of other officers, and myself decided to form a little caravan and walk to Grenoble, passing along the lower spurs of the Alps, by Grasse, Sisteron, Digne, and Gap. Our scanty luggage was carried by mules, so that we could do eight or ten leagues a day. Bastide was with me, and I found him a great help, for I was not used to going so far on foot, and it was very hot. After eight days of a difficult march we reached Grenoble, where we found carriages to take us on to Lyons. It was with pain that I again beheld that town, where my father and I had stayed in a happier time. I longed and dreaded to see my mother and brothers. I felt as if they would demand of me an account for husband and father; I was returning alone, and had left him in his grave in a strange land. My grief was very keen. I needed a friend who would comprehend and share it; and meanwhile the wild spirits of Major R——, revelling, after so much privation, in abundant good cheer, cut me to the heart. I resolved, therefore, to set out for Paris without him; but, now that I needed him no longer, he averred that his duty was to restore me to the arms of my mother, and I was obliged to endure his company in the mail coach as far as Paris.

I will not attempt to recount my meeting with my mother and brothers. Some scenes can be realised by everyone who has a heart, but are too sad to describe. Adolphe was not at Paris, but at Rennes, with Bernadotte, then commanding the Army of the West. My mother had a rather pretty house at Carrière, near the forest of St. Germain. I passed two months there with her, my uncle Canrobert, who had come back from abroad, and an old Knight of Malta, M. d'Estresse, a former friend of my father's; my young brother and M. Gault came now and then to visit us. In spite of the loving care and the proofs of affection which all bestowed on me, I fell into a gloomy state of melancholy, and my health gave way. Both in mind and in body I had suffered much. I became incapable of any work; reading, of which I had always been fond, grew intolerable to me. I spent a great part of the day alone in the forest, lying in the shade and plunged in sad meditation. Of an evening I would accompany my mother, my uncle, and the old gentleman in their customary walk along the banks of the Seine; but I joined little in the conversation, keeping my sad thoughts to myself. I was ever thinking of my poor father dying for want of proper care. My mother, my uncle, and M. d'Estresse, though alarmed at my state, had sufficient tact not

to take notice of it—a thing which only irritates a mind out of health; but they endeavoured gradually to remove the sad recollections which were torturing me by getting the holidays of my two younger brothers hastened forward. They joined us in the country, and the presence of these two lads, of whom I was very fond, allowed me to divert my mind from my sorrow by the trouble which I took to make their stay at Carrière pleasant. I took them to Versailles, to Maisons, to Marly, and their childish satisfaction gradually revived my heart after the crushing sorrow which it had undergone. Who could then have foretold that these two handsome boys, so full of life, would have shortly ceased to exist?

CHAPTER XII.

The autumn of 1800 was drawing to an end. My mother returned to Paris, my young brothers to school, and I received orders to go to Rennes and join the commander-in-chief—Bernadotte. He had been the closest friend of my father, who had rendered him services of all kinds in various circumstances. To evince his gratitude, Bernadotte had written to me that he had kept an aide-de-camp's place vacant for me. I had found his letter at Nice on my return from Genoa, and it had decided me to refuse the offer of Masséna to take me as regular aide-de-camp, with leave at the same time to spend some months with my mother before rejoining the Army of Italy. My father had insisted on my brother's continuing the studies necessary for entry into the Ecole Polytechnique, so that when we lost our father Adolphe was not yet in the army. When, however, he heard the sad news, he was unable to bear the thought that while his younger brother was already an officer who had seen service he was still on the form. He threw up his study for the scientific corps, and preferred to enter the infantry at once, which allowed him to leave the school. A good opportunity offered; the Government had just ordered the creation of a new regiment, which was being raised in the department of the Seine. The nomination of the officers was to be in the hands of General Lefebvre, who, as you will remember, had succeeded my father in the command of the Paris division. Lefebvre eagerly seized the opportunity to be of service to the son of one of his old comrades who had died in the service of his country, so he appointed my brother a sub-lieutenant in the new corps. So far it was all right, but, instead of going to join his company, and without even awaiting my return from Genoa, Adolphe hurried off to Rennes to join Bernadotte, who, without further consideration, gave the post to the brother who arrived first, as if it was a question of a prize for a race. In this way, when I reached Rennes and joined the staff of the Army of the West, I learnt that my

brother had received the commission of regular aide-de-camp to the chief, and that I was only a supernumerary, that is, provisional aide-de-camp. I was much disappointed, for if I had expected this I should have accepted Masséna's proposal; but it was now too late. In vain did Bernadotte assure me that he would obtain leave to increase the number of his aides-de-camp. I had no hope of it, and I understood that before long I should have to go elsewhere. I have never approved of two brothers serving together on the same staff or in the same regiment, because they always stand in each other's way. It will be seen that this happened frequently in the course of our career.

Bernadotte's staff was at that time composed of officers who nearly all reached a high rank. Four of them were already colonels, viz.: Gérard, Maison, Willatte, and Maurin, of whom Gérard was undoubtedly the most remarkable. He had plenty of talent and of courage, and a great instinct for war. At the battle of Waterloo he was under the orders of Marshal Grouchy, and gave him admirable advice, which might have assured us the victory. Maison became a marshal, and afterwards Minister of War, under the Bourbons. Willatte was a general of division under the Restoration; Maurin the same. The other aides-de-camp of Bernadotte were Majors Chalopin, killed at Austerlitz, and Mergey, who became major-general; Captain Maurin, brother of the colonel, became major-general, also Sub-Lieutenant Willate. My brother Adolphe, who became major-general, was the last of the regular aides-de-camp; finally, Maurin, brother of the other two, who became colonel, and I were the supernumeraries. Thus of eleven aides-de-camp attached to the staff of Bernadotte, two reached the rank of marshal, three that of lieutenant-general, four major-general, and one died on the field of battle.

In the winter of 1800 Portugal, supported by England, declared war against Spain, and the French Government resolved to take the side of the latter Power. Consequently troops were sent to Bayonne and Bordeaux, and at Tours were assembled the grenadier companies of numerous regiments quartered about Brittany and Vendée. This select force, 7,000 to 8,000 men strong, was intended to form the reserve of the so-called Army of Portugal, of which Bernadotte was to have the command. He therefore had to move his head-quarters to Tours, whither were sent his horses and his outfit, as also those of the officers attached to his person. The general, however, in order both to receive his last orders from the

Consul and to take Madame Bernadotte back, had to go to Paris. As in such cases it is usual during the absence of the general for his staff officers to have leave to go and take farewell of their families, it was decided that all the regular aides-de-camp might go to Paris, and that the supernumeraries should accompany the baggage to Tours in order to look after the domestics and pay them every month, and to arrange with the commissaries for the distribution of forage and the allotment of quarters for this large number of men and horses. This disagreeable duty therefore fell upon Lieutenant Maurin and myself. On horseback and in the depth of winter and in horrible weather, we did the eight long days of march which separate Rennes from Tours; and there we had all sorts of trouble in installing the head-quarters. We were told that it would remain there for a fortnight at most, but we remained there six long months, horribly bored, our comrades the while enjoying themselves in the capital. This was a foretaste of the annoyances which the position of supernumerary aide-de-camp caused me. Thus ended the year 1800, during which I had undergone so much pain both of mind and body.

CHAPTER XIII.

At that time there was very good society at Tours, and much amusement going on; but although I received many invitations I accepted none. The task of attending to the oversight of a great number of men and horses fortunately kept me well occupied; otherwise the isolation in which I lived would have been unendurable. The horses belonging to the commander-in-chief and to the officers of his staff were more than eighty in number, and all were at my disposal. I took two or three of them every day and made long excursions in the neighbourhood of Tours. These, solitary as they were, had a great charm for me, and afforded me a tranquil distraction.

Meanwhile the First Consul had changed his arrangements with regard to the Army of Portugal. He entrusted the command of it to his brother-in-law, General Leclerc,[1] and retained Bernadotte with the Army of the West. Consequently when my brother and the other aides-de-camp had rejoined the staff at Tours they received orders almost directly to return to Brittany and remove to Brest, whither the general was about to proceed. It is a long journey, especially when one travels by fixed marches; but it was the fine time of year, we were young, and there were plenty of us, so the way was merry enough. Being unable to ride, owing to an injury which I had accidentally received in the hip, I went in one of the general's carriages. Him we found at Brest.

In the harbour of Brest were not only a great number of French vessels, but also a Spanish fleet, commanded by Admiral Gravina. He was killed afterwards at Trafalgar, where the combined fleets of France and Spain fought that of England under the celebrated Nelson, who also lost his life in the engagement. At the time of our arrival at Brest, the fleets were intended to take General Bernadotte and a strong expeditionary force of French and Spaniards over to Ireland. This plan was never carried out, but in the meantime the

[1] [Married to Pauline Bonaparte. See below, p. 96.]

presence of so many officers, naval and military, kept the town of Brest very lively. The commander-in-chief and many generals and admirals kept open house, and the soldiers of the two nations were on the most friendly terms; so that I made the acquaintance of several Spanish officers.

We were very well off at Brest, till the commander-in-chief thought it wiser to retransfer the head-quarters to Rennes, a dull town, but more central for his district. No sooner had we got settled there than what I had foreseen happened. The First Consul reduced the number of aides-de-camp which the general might keep on his staff. He was to have only one colonel and five officers of lower rank; no more *provisional* aides-de-camp. Accordingly I received notice that I was to be attached to a light cavalry regiment. I could have made up my mind to it well enough if it had been to return to the 1st Hussars, where I was known, and of which I still wore the uniform; but it was more than a year since I had left the regiment, and the colonel had filled up my place. The Minister sent me a commission in the 25th Mounted Chasseurs, which had just entered Spain and was marching on the Portuguese frontier, in the direction of Salamanca and Zamora. I felt keenly the injury that Bernadotte had done me in misleading me by false promises; for otherwise I should either have been a regular member of Masséna's staff in Italy, or have resumed my place in the 1st Hussars. Discontented as I was, I was bound to obey orders; and my first impulse of ill-humour past—they pass quickly at that age—I was in a hurry to be on the road and get away from the general against whom I had a grievance. My father had often lent him money, especially when he was buying his estate at Lagrange; but, though he knew that his old friend's son, hardly well of a recent injury, had to traverse a great part of France and the whole of Spain, and buy new uniforms into the bargain, he never offered to advance me a sou; and, short of money as I was, I would not have asked him to do so for all the world. But, luckily for me, there was at Rennes an old uncle of my mother's, M. de Verdal of Gruniac, formerly paymaster in the Penthièvre regiment of foot. It was with him that my mother had lived during the first years of the Revolution. This old gentleman, though somewhat eccentric, was very kind; not only did he advance me the money of which I stood in great need, but he gave me some out of his own purse.

The chasseurs at that period wore the hussar-jacket,

except that it was green; but none the less I was foolish enough to shed a few tears when I had to abandon the Bercheny uniform and give up the name of hussar for that of chasseur. I took leave pretty coldly of Bernadotte. He gave me letters of introduction to Lucien Bonaparte, then ambassador at Madrid, and to General Leclerc, commanding the Army of Portugal.

On the day of my departure all the aides-de-camp gave me a breakfast, and I set out with a heavy heart. Two days' journey brought me to Nantes, tired to death, with much pain in my side, and convinced that I should never have endurance enough to ride the 450 leagues which lay between me and the frontier of Portugal. As good luck would have it, at Nantes, in the house of one of my schoolfellows of Sorèze, I found a Spanish officer, by name Don Rafael, who was going to the depôt of his regiment in Estremadura. We arranged that I should show him the way as far as the Pyrenees, and that from that point he should assume the direction of the journey so far as our ways lay together.

We passed through La Vendée by coach. Every market-town and village still bore the traces of burning, though two years had passed since the end of the civil war. It was a painful sight. We visited La Rochelle, Rochefort, and Bordeaux. From the last place to Bayonne we travelled in carriages with four places, which never went out of a walk through the sandy Landes. We often got out, and, walking merrily forward, would go and rest under some clump of pines. As we sat in the shade Don Rafael would take his guitar and sing. In this way we reached Bayonne in five or six days.

Before crossing the Pyrenees I had to present myself to the general commanding at Bayonne, whose name was Ducos; an excellent man, who had served under my father. He took an interest in me, and was anxious that I should delay entering Spain for a few days, as he had just learnt that a band of brigands had been rifling some travellers not far from the frontier. At all times, even before the War of Independence, their adventurous and yet indolent character has given the Spaniards a decided taste for brigandage, which has been further encouraged by the division of the country into several kingdoms, once independent states, and still preserving their own laws, fashions, and frontiers. In some of these ancient states there are customs-duties; others, like Biscay and Navarre, are exempt. The consequence is, that

the inhabitants of the provinces which enjoy free trade are always trying to smuggle forbidden wares into those whose frontiers are guarded by lines of well-armed and brave preventive men. The smugglers, on their side, have from time immemorial been quite ready to employ force where craft does not succeed; nor is their trade in any way discreditable in Spanish eyes, being considered a righteous warfare against the abuse of customs-duties. To plan expeditions and carry them out without concealment, to take military precautions, to hide in the mountains, resting, smoking, sleeping—such is the life of the smugglers. The large profits on a single successful operation put them in a position to live at their ease and do nothing for several months. When, however, the custom-house people have beaten them in one of their frequent fights, and captured their convoy of merchandise, the smugglers, brought to bay, have no scruple about turning highwaymen. They exercise their calling with much good feeling, for they never murder travellers, and as a rule leave them money enough to continue their journey. They had just treated an English family in this fashion; and General Ducos, wishing to spare us the inconvenience of being plundered, had intended to delay our departure. Don Rafael, however, remarked that he knew the ways of Spanish brigands well enough to be certain that the safest time to travel through a given district was when the bands had just committed an offence against the law, because at such times they get out of the way for a while. So the general sanctioned our departure.

At the time of which I am speaking carriage-horses were quite unknown in Spain, all carriages, even those of the king, being drawn by mules. Coaches there were none, and for postin g there were only saddle-horses, so that the very greatest nobles who had their own carriages were compelled when they travelled to hire mules and go by short day's journeys. Well-to-do travellers hired carriages which did not do more than ten leagues in the day; the poorer people joined one of the caravans of donkey-drivers who transported goods after the fashion of our carriers; but nobody travelled alone, partly by reason of the highwaymen, but also for the low esteem in which this mode of travelling was held. After our arrival at Bayonne, Don Rafael, who now had the direction of our journey, told me that, as we were neither sufficiently great people to hire a carriage and a team of mules for ourselves, nor paupers enough to go with the ass-drivers, the only alternative left was to ride post or to take places in a hired carriage. Riding post, which I

have since often done, did not suit me, because it was impossible to take our baggage with us; it was decided, then, that we had to go by public carriage. Don Rafael made terms with an individual who, in consideration of 800 francs apiece, undertook to carry us to Salamanca, providing our board and lodging at his own cost. I thought this very dear, for it was double what a similar journey would have cost in France, and I had just had to spend a good deal of money on the journey to Bayonne; but it was the regular price, and there was no other way of getting to my new regiment, so I accepted the terms.

We started in an immense old coach, three places in which were occupied by an inhabitant of Cadiz with his wife and daughter. A prior of Benedictines from the University of Salamanca made up the tale of passengers. Everything in this journey was naturally new to me. To begin with, the team astonished me much. It consisted of six splendid mules, of which, to my great surprise, the wheelers alone had reins and bridles. The other four went free, guided by the voice of the driver and his *zagal*, or teamster. The former, perched in lordly style on a huge box, gave his orders gravely to the *zagal*, who, nimble as a squirrel, would often do more than a league on foot, running beside the mules at full trot; then in the twinkling of an eye he would climb on to the box beside his master, only to get down and get up again, and that twenty times during the journey. He would run round the carriage and the team to make sure that nothing was out of place, and as he performed this exercise he was continually singing to encourage his mules, each of which he would call by her name; he never struck them, his voice being sufficient to stimulate any one who was slackening her pace.

The performances, and especially the songs, of this man were a great amusement to me. I took also much interest in the conversation that went on in the carriage; for though I spoke no Spanish, what I knew of Latin and Italian made me able to understand my companions, and I answered them in French, which they understood fairly well. The five Spaniards —even the two ladies and the monk—soon lighted up their cigars. I regretted that I had not yet acquired the habit of smoking. We were all in good humour; Don Rafael, the ladies, and even the stout Benedictine used to sing in chorus. We generally started betimes, and used to stop from one to three to dine, rest the mules, and let the heat of the day go by. During this we slept, or, as the Spaniards call it, made our *siesta*. Then we went on to our sleeping-place. The meals

were plentiful enough, but the flavour of the Spanish cookery seemed to me at first horrible; however, I ended by getting used to it, but I never could reconcile myself to the dreadful beds which were offered to us in the *posadas*, or inns. They were truly disgusting, as Don Rafael, who had just passed a year in France, was compelled to admit. To avoid this inconvenience, on the first day of entering Spain I asked to sleep on a truss of straw. Unhappily, I learnt that a truss of straw was a thing unknown in this country, since, instead of threshing the sheaves, they are trampled out by mules, whereby the straw is reduced to small pieces of hardly more than half a finger's length. I had the brilliant idea of getting a great sack filled with this chopped straw; then, placing it in a barn, I slept on it wrapped in my cloak, and thus escaped the vermin with which the beds and the rooms were infested. In the morning I emptied my sack and placed it in the carriage, and in this fashion, by getting it filled at each sleeping-place, I had a clean mattress. My invention was imitated by Don Rafael.

We traversed the mountainous provinces of Navarre, Biscay, and Alava; then we crossed the Ebro and entered the vast plains of Castile. We saw Burgos and Valladolid, and after fifteen days' journey reached Salamanca. There I parted, not without regret, from my pleasant travelling-companion Don Rafael, whom I was to meet again later on in the same regions during the War of Independence. General Leclerc was at Salamanca; he received me most kindly, and even proposed that I should stay with him as supernumerary aide-de-camp; but my recent experience had shown me that, although service on the staff offers more advantages in the way of liberty than service with the regiment, this is only when one holds the position of a regular aide-de-camp, otherwise all the tiresome duties fall to your share, and you have only a very uncertain position. I refused, therefore, the favour which the commander-in-chief offered me, and asked leave to do duty with my regiment. It was just as well that I acted in this way, for in the following year the general, having got the command of the expedition to San Domingo, took with him a lieutenant who had accepted the place which I refused, and all the staff officers, as well as the general, died of the yellow fever.

I found the 25th Chasseurs at Salamanca. The colonel, M. Moreau, a very kind old officer, and my new comrades received me well, and in a few days I was on the best terms with them all. I was introduced to the society of the town; for at that time the position of a Frenchman in Spain was pleasant

enough, and quite unlike what it afterwards became. In fact, in 1801 we were allies of the Spaniards; we came to fight on their behalf against the Portuguese and English, and so they treated us as friends. The French officers were lodged with the most wealthy inhabitants; there was quite a competition to take us in; we were received everywhere, and overwhelmed with invitations. Admitted thus familiarly into the homes of the Spaniards, we were able to form a much better idea of their character in a short time than those officers could do in several years who did not come to the Peninsula until the War of Independence. I lodged with a professor of the University, who put me in a very pleasant room looking out on the fine square. My regimental duties were light, and left me plenty of leisure, of which I availed myself to study the Spanish language, which, to my thinking, is the most stately and the finest in Europe. At Salamanca I met for the first time the celebrated General Lasalle, then colonel of the 10th Hussars: he sold me a horse.

The 15,000 French sent into the Peninsula, under General Leclerc, formed the right wing of the Spanish grand army, commanded by the Prince of the Peace, under whose orders they therefore were. He came one day to review us. This favourite of the Queen of Spain was at that time practically king. He seemed to me very well satisfied with his personal appearance, although he was small of stature and of no distinction; still he lacked neither elegance nor ability. He ordered our division forward, and my regiment went to Toro, and then to Zamora. At first I regretted Salamanca, but we were very well off in the other towns, and especially at Zamora. There I lodged with a rich merchant, whose house had a splendid garden, where a numerous company used to meet in the evening for music and conversation, amid shrubberies of pomegranates, myrtles and lemon-trees. It is hard to appreciate thoroughly the beauties of nature unless one knows these delicious nights of Southern lands.

Nevertheless, we had to tear ourselves from this agreeable life to go and attack the Portuguese. We invaded their territory, and got the best of them in several trifling affairs. The French division marched upon Viseu, while the Spanish army descended the Tagus and entered the Alemtejo. We counted on shortly entering Lisbon as conquerors; but the Prince of the Peace, who had without due consideration summoned the troops into the Peninsula, became, with no more consideration, alarmed at their presence, and in order to

get rid of them concluded the treaty of peace with Portugal without the knowledge of the First Consul. He was clever enough to get this ratified by the French ambassador Lucien Bonaparte, which irritated the First Consul considerably, and from that day dated the enmity of the two brothers. The French troops remained some months longer in Portugal, till the beginning of 1802. We then returned to Spain, and revisited our pleasant garrisons of Zamora, Toro, and Salamanca, where we had always been so well received. This time I traversed Spain on horseback with my regiment, and had no longer to dread the horrible beds of the *posadas*, since we were billeted every night in the most well-to-do houses. This marching by stages when one goes with a regiment, and in fine weather, is not wanting in a certain charm: one is always changing the scene without leaving one's companions; one gets a detailed view of the country; one chats as one goes along; at meals, whether good or bad, one has company; and one is in a good position for observing the ways of the inhabitants. Our chief amusement of an evening was to see the Spaniards, aroused from their languor, dance fandangos and boleros with perfect grace and agility. The colonel often offered them the band, but they preferred, with reason, their guitars, castanets, and women's voices—an accompaniment which does not take away the national character from their dance. These impromptu open-air balls of the working-class in town and country alike had such a charm for us, though only as spectators, that we were sorry to leave them behind. After more than a month's march we recrossed the Bidassoa; and though my stay in Spain had given me nothing but satisfaction, I was pleased to see France again.

CHAPTER XIV.

At that time each regiment managed its own remounts, and our colonel had been authorised to buy some sixty horses. He hoped to pick them up by degrees in French Navarre, on the way to Toulouse, where we were to be in garrison. But for my sins we arrived at Bayonne on the very day of the local fair. There were numbers of horse-dealers there, and the colonel arranged with one of them to furnish at once the horses required. They could not be paid for in ready money, because the funds of which we had been advised by the Minister would not arrive for eight days. Accordingly the colonel ordered that an officer should remain at Bayonne to receive the money and pay the dealer; and this duty, which I did not bless, fell to me. Later on it cost me a disagreeable adventure; but at the moment I thought only of losing the pleasure of my comrades' society on the journey. Still, annoying as it was, I had to obey orders. That I might have less trouble in rejoining the regiment, the colonel decided that my horse should go on with it, and that, my task accomplished, I should take the coach for Toulouse. There were several of my old schoolfellows at Bayonne, and with them I passed the time pleasantly. The funds came; I received them and paid, and, my cares being at an end, prepared to rejoin my regiment.

I possessed a jacket made of nankeen, with trimmings of the same, and silver buttons—a fancy uniform which I had had made when I was on Bernadotte's staff, where it was the fashion to dress in this way for travelling in hot weather. This I determined to wear for the journey from Bayonne to Toulouse, as I was not with the regiment. So I put my uniform in my trunk and sent it to the coach, having engaged, and unluckily *paid for*, my place. It was to start at five in the morning, and I charged the waiter at my hotel to call me at four, which the scamp faithfully promised to do. So I went to sleep in perfect security; but he forgot me, and when I opened my eyes the sun was shining brightly into my room, and it was past eight. What a nuisance! I was petrified. However,

after storming a good deal, swearing a little, and invoking curses on the head of the faithless waiter, I saw that I must make up my mind to do something. The coach only went every other day, which was inconvenient, to begin with; but it was not the worst; for though, as I had remained behind on duty, my fare had been found out of the regimental chest, I could not claim this a second time. I had been foolish enough to pay for the whole distance, so that if I booked afresh it would have to be out of my own pocket. Coach-fares were very dear then, and I had very little money. Moreover, what could I do for two days at Bayonne, when all my things were gone? So I settled to walk the distance. Starting straightway from the town, I trudged resolutely along the Toulouse road. I was lightly clad, and had nothing to carry but my sword, which I carried on my shoulder; so I did the first stage nimbly enough, and slept at Peyrehorade.

On the morrow—a day of ill-omen—I was to reach Orthez. I had already done half the distance when one of those fearful storms which one only sees in the South came on. Rain and hail fell in torrents and lashed my face. The high-road, never good, became a quagmire through which I had all conceivable difficulty in walking with spurs on my boots. A walnut-tree was struck by lightning close to me; but no matter, I went steadily on with the resolution of a Stoic. But behold, in the midst of the lightning and the tempest, I saw two mounted gendarmes approaching. You may imagine the figure I cut, after two hours' wading through the mud, with my nankeen pantaloons and jacket. The gendarmes belonged to the force at Peyrehorade, and were returning thither; but they seemed to have been breakfasting well at Orthez, for they struck me as being fairly drunk. The elder asked for my papers. I handed him my passport whereon I was described as sub-lieutenant in the 25th Mounted Chasseurs. 'You a sub-lieutenant!' cried the gendarme. 'You are too young to be an officer.' 'But read the personal description, and you will see it says that I am under twenty; besides, it is correct at all points.' 'That may be, but you have forged it, and the proof is that the uniform of the Chasseurs is green, and you have got a yellow jacket. You are a runaway conscript, and I arrest you.' 'Very good; but when we get to Orthez I shall have no difficulty in proving to your lieutenant that I am an officer and this passport was made out for me.' My arrest did not trouble me much until the elder gendarme declared that he had no intention of returning to Orthez, that his quarters were

at Peyrehorade, and that I was going thither with him. I declared I was not going to do any such thing; that if I had had no papers he would have a right to require it, but that as I had produced a passport he had no business to make me go back, and that according to the regulations he ought to go with me to Orthez. The younger man, who was also less in liquor, said that I was right; whereupon a lively altercation arose between the two horsemen. They insulted each other freely, and presently, in the midst of the tremendous storm which was going on all the time, they drew their swords and fell on madly. As for me, being afraid that I might get wounded in this ridiculous combat, I got down into the immense ditch by the roadside, waded through up to my waist in water, and clambered up into the neighbouring field, whence I had a good view of my lively friends foining away to the best of their power. Luckily their cloaks, heavy with wet, hampered their arms, and their horses, frightened by the thunder, would not come near each other, so the combatants were only able to aim unsteady blows. At last the elder gendarme's horse fell, and the rider rolled into the ditch. Emerging, covered with mud, he found that his saddle was broken, and that he had no choice but to continue his journey on foot, which he did, announcing to his comrade that he must be responsible for the prisoner. Left alone with the more reasonable of the gendarmes, I pointed out to him that if I had had a guilty conscience it would have been easy for me to escape across country, since I had between him and me a broad ditch full of water which his horse would certainly not be able to cross, but that, as he admitted that he had no right to make me retrace my steps, I was going to recross and come to him. So I resumed my journey escorted by the gendarme, who was quite sobered. We fell into conversation, and the man, understanding from the way in which I had surrendered when I might have easily escaped that I probably was what I said, would have let me go but for his responsibility to his comrade. Finally he became ready to do anything for me, and said that he would not take me to Orthez, but would be satisfied with consulting the mayor of Puyoo as we passed through that place. I entered it as a malefactor; the inhabitants, all driven home by the storm, stood at windows and doors to see the criminal brought in by a gendarme. The mayor, a good, stout, sensible peasant, whom we found in his barn threshing his wheat, looked through my passport, and said at once to the gendarme, 'Set this young man at liberty at once.

You had no right to arrest him, for an officer on a journey is identified by his papers not by his clothes.' Could Solomon have given a better judgment? Nor did the good peasant stop at that. He begged me to stay with him till the storm was over, and offered me refreshments. As we chatted he said that he had once seen a General Marbot at Orthez. I said it was my father, and described him. Thereat the good fellow, whose name was Bordenave, with redoubled civility, insisted on drying my clothes, and wanted me to stay the night. I declined with thanks, and resumed my way to Orthez, where I arrived at nightfall, tired out and with aching limbs.

Next morning I had hard work to get my boots on, so wet were they and so swollen my feet. Still, I dragged myself as far as Pau, and there, being quite done up, I had to halt for the rest of the day. I found no means of conveyance other than the mail; the places were dear, but I took one to Gimont. There I was received with open arms by M. Dorignac, the friend of my father, in whose house I had passed some months after leaving Sorèze. I rested some days with him and his family; then the coach bore me to Toulouse. My expenses had come to four times the cost of the place which the waiter's carelessness had lost me.

On reaching Toulouse I was going to set about finding a lodging, but the colonel told me that he had taken me a room in the house of an old doctor, a friend of his, named M. Merlhes. I shall never forget his name, for no one could have been kinder than were this venerable man and his numerous family. During the fortnight that I stayed with them I was treated rather as a child of the house than as a lodger.

The regiment was strong and well mounted; we exercised very often, and I took much interest in it, though I got occasional punishments over it from Major Blancheville. He was an excellent officer of long standing in the service, and from him I learnt to do my duty with precision, and in this respect I owe much to him. Before the Revolution he had been adjutant in the Lunéville gendarmes, and had a thorough knowledge of his profession. He took a great interest in such young officers as were capable of learning and forced them, whether they would or not, to study their business. As for the others—the blockheads as he called them—he was contented to shrug his shoulders when they did not know their theory or blundered in their drill; but he never punished them for that. There were three of us sub-lieutenants whom he had distinguished; these were MM. Gavoille, Demonts, and myself.

With us he never overlooked an inaccurate word of command, and would put us under arrest for the smallest faults. As he was very good-natured off duty, we ventured to ask him why he reserved his severity for us. He replied, 'Do you think I am such a fool as to waste my time in soaping a negro? MM. —— and —— are too old, and have not sufficient abilities for me to waste my time in completing their education. As for you, you have got all the necessary materials for success; you only want to work, and work you shall.' I never forgot this answer, which I turned to account when I was colonel. Old Blancheville undoubtedly had drawn the horoscope of the three sub-lieutenants correctly, for Gavoille became lieutenant-colonel, Demonts general of brigade, and I lieutenant-general.

When I came to Toulouse I exchanged the horse which I had bought in Spain for a beautiful Navarrese. The prefect having got up some races on the occasion of some festivity or other, Gavoille, who was devoted to races, had entered my horse. One day, when I was practising him on the training-ground, the circle being small, he got puzzled with the sharpness of the curve, and, galloping straight forward with the speed of an arrow, he ran his chest against the sharp angle of a garden wall, and fell stone-dead. My comrades thought I was killed, or at least severely wounded; but by a perfectly miraculous piece of luck, I had not the smallest scratch. When they picked me up, and I saw my poor horse lying motionless, I felt deep grief. I returned, very melancholy, to my quarters, seeing that I should be forced to remount myself, and for that purpose to ask my mother, who was by no means in affluence, for some more money. Count Defermon, a minister of state, and one of our trustees, had opposed the sale of our remaining property, because, foreseeing that when peace came land would increase in value, he thought, with reason, that we ought to hold on to it and gradually reduce our debts by strict economy. It was one of the greatest obligations that we owed to M. Defermon, who was one of my father's sincerest friends, and I have always retained a great reverence for his memory.

When my request for a new horse was brought before the trustees, General Bernadotte, who was one of them, burst out laughing, saying that it was an excellent trick, and the pretext very well chosen—in fact, giving them to understand that my request was what is nowadays called a 'plant.' But, luckily, my request was backed up by a certificate from my colonel, and M. Defermon added that he believed me incapable of trying to

get money by a trick. He was quite right; for though I only had an allowance of 600 francs, while my pay was only ninety-five francs a month, with twelve francs in addition for lodging, I never was a sou in debt—I always had a dread of it.

I bought a new horse—not as good as the Navarrese, but the general inspection, which the First Consul had re-established, was drawing near, and I was obliged to be mounted without delay; all the more that we were going to be inspected by the celebrated General Bourcier, who had a great reputation for severity. I was told off to go and receive him with a detachment of thirty men. He met me very kindly and spoke of my father, whom he had known well, which did not prevent him from putting me under arrest the next day. You shall hear the reason; it is a good story.

One of our captains, named B——, a fine young fellow, would have been one of the handsomest men in the army if his calves had been in keeping with the rest of his person; but he had legs like stilts, which had a very bad effect with the tight—so-called Hungarian—pantaloons worn at that time by the chasseurs. In order to meet this inconvenience, Captain B—— had had some good-sized pads made in the shape of calves, which made his handsome figure complete. You shall see how these false calves cost me an arrest, though they were not the sole cause of it. It was prescribed by the regulations that the officers should have their horses' tails long, like those of the troopers. Our colonel, M. Moreau, was always admirably mounted, but all his horses had their tails docked, and, as he feared that General Bourcier, who was very strict in maintaining the regulations, would reprimand him for setting a bad example to his officers, he had caused, for the purpose of the inspection, false tails to be attached to all his horses. These were so marvellously well fitted that unless you knew you would have thought them natural. We went to the inspection, to which General Bourcier had invited General Suchet, inspector of infantry, as well as General Gudin, commanding the territorial division. They were accompanied by a numerous and brilliant staff; the business took a long time, the movements were nearly all carried out at a gallop, and ended with several charges at full speed. I was commanding a section in the centre, forming part of the squadron under M. B——, near whom the colonel placed himself. They were, therefore, two paces in front of me, when the generals came forward to congratulate M.

Moreau on the admirable style in which the manœuvres were carried out. But what did I see? The extreme rapidity of the movements which we had just made had deranged the symmetry of the additions which the captain and the colonel had made to their get-up. The false tail of the colonel's horse had become partly detached; the stump, composed of a plug of tow, was dragging almost on the ground, like a skein, while the false hair was up in the air, several feet higher, and spread out fan-shaped over the horse's croup, so that he seemed to have an enormous peacock's tail. As for M. B——'s sham calves, under the pressure of the saddle flaps they had slipped forward without his perceiving it, and presented a round lump on his shin bones, which produced a most comical effect; the captain all the while sitting proudly upright on his horse, as who should say, 'Look at me! What a handsome man I am!' At twenty years old one has not much gravity; mine was overcome by the grotesque spectacle which I had under my eyes, and, in spite of the imposing presence of three generals, I could not restrain myself from shouting wildly with laughter. I writhed on my saddle, I gnawed the sleeve of my jacket: it was no use; I laughed and laughed until my sides ached. Thereupon the inspector-general, not knowing the cause of my merriment, ordered me to fall out of the ranks and put myself under arrest. I obeyed, but, as I was obliged to pass between the horses of the colonel and of the captain, my eyes fell again, in spite of myself, on that infernal tail and also on the new-fashioned calves, and there I was again seized with an inextinguishable laugh which nothing could check. The generals must have thought that I was gone mad; but as soon as they had departed, the officers of the regiment, coming up to the colonel and Captain B——, soon knew what was the matter, and laughed like me—but at least with less danger to themselves.

That evening Major Blancheville was at a party at Mme. Gudin's. General Bourcier, who happened to be there, having spoken of what he called my freak, M. Blancheville explained the cause of my irresistible fit of laughter. The generals, the ladies, and all the staff laughed till they cried at the story, and their gaiety redoubled at the entry of the handsome Captain B——, who, having replaced his false calves in the right position, came to show himself off in this brilliant company, without suspecting that he was one of the causes of its merriment. General Bourcier realised that if he had not been able to

refrain from bursting with laughter at the mere description of the picture which I had had under my eyes, it was natural that a young sub-lieutenant should have been unable to contain himself when he was the witness of so ridiculous a spectacle. He remitted my arrest, and sent to fetch me at once. As soon as I entered the room the inspector-general and all the assembly went off in an immense shout of laughter, in which my recollection of the morning made me take a full share; and the mirth became crazy when M. B——, the only person who did not know the cause of it, was seen to go from one to the other, asking what it was all about, while everybody was looking at his calves.

CHAPTER XV.

But let us come to more serious matters. The treaty of Lunéville had been followed by the Peace of Amiens, which closed the war between France and England. The First Consul resolved to profit by the tranquillity of Europe and the recovered freedom of the seas to send a numerous force to San Domingo with a view of freeing the island from the control of the blacks and their leader, Toussaint-Louverture.

Toussaint, without being in overt rebellion against the mother-country, had assumed great airs of independence. The expedition was to be commanded by General Leclerc, who was not without capacity, and had done well in Italy and in Egypt. His chief eminence, however, arose from his having married Pauline Bonaparte, sister of the First Consul. He was the son of a miller of Pontoise, if the name of miller may be applied to the rich owner of enormous mills, doing a very large trade. This miller had given a first-rate education to his son as well as to his daughter, who became the wife of General Davout.

While General Leclerc was getting ready for his departure, the forces destined for the expedition were assembled by the First Consul in Brittany, and, as was customary, these troops up till the day of their embarkation found themselves under the command of Bernadotte, commander-in-chief of the Army of the West. Now, as is well known, there was always a strong rivalry between the Armies of the Rhine and of Italy; the former were much attached to General Moreau, and had no love for General Bonaparte, whose rise to the head of the Government they had seen with regret. On his side the First Consul had a great preference for the soldiers who had fought with him in Italy and Egypt; and though his antagonism to Moreau was not as yet fully declared, he understood that it was to his interest to get the troops who were devoted to Moreau as far out of the way as possible. Accordingly the regiments intended for the expedition to San Domingo were nearly all selected from the Army of the Rhine. Thus separated from

Moreau, they were very well satisfied to find themselves in Brittany under the command of Bernadotte, Moreau's old lieutenant, who had seen nearly all his service with them on the Rhine. The expedition was to consist of about 40,000 men; in the Army of the West proper there were an equal number. Thus Bernadotte, whose command extended over all the departments from the mouth of the Gironde to that of the Seine, was for the moment at the head of an army of 80,000 men, the majority of whom were much more attached to him than to the head of the Consular Government.

If Bernadotte had been a man of a stronger character the First Consul would have found reason to repent of having given him so important a command; for, as I can now state, without injuring anyone, and simply as an historical fact, Bernadotte conspired against the Government of which Bonaparte was the head. In regard to this conspiracy I will give some details, all the more interesting for never having been publicly known, perhaps not known even by Bonaparte himself.

Generals Bernadotte and Moreau, jealous of the First Consul's rise, and dissatisfied with the small share which he gave them in public affairs, had resolved to overthrow him and place themselves at the head of the Government, taking as assessor someone used to civil administration, or some clear-headed lawyer. To accomplish this end, Bernadotte, who, I must say, had a knack peculiar to himself of winning the affection of officers and soldiers, visited the provinces throughout his district, reviewing bodies of troops and employing every means to attach them more firmly to himself. Towards the subalterns he employed every kind of cajolery, money bribes, promises of promotion, while in private conversation with the chiefs he ran down the First Consul and his Government. After having brought the great number of the regiments to disaffection, it became easy to drive them to revolt, those especially who were destined to the expedition to San Domingo and looked upon this service as a form of transportation.

Bernadotte's chief of the staff was a general of brigade named Simon—a man of ability but of weak character. Being enabled by his position to be in daily correspondence with the heads of regiments, he abused his opportunity to make his office the centre of the conspiracy. A major named Fourcart —whom you remember as a poor old sub-librarian with the Duke of Orleans, a place which I got him out of pity for his

thirty years of misery—was then working under General Simon, and became his principal agent. Going from garrison to garrison under the guise of performing his duties, he organised a secret league, which was joined by nearly all the colonels and a great number of superior officers. Their opposition to the First Consul was stimulated by accusations that he was aspiring to the crown—an idea which would appear not to have come into his head as yet. It was arranged that the garrison of Rennes, consisting of several regiments, should start the movement, which would then spread like a train of powder through all the divisions of the army. As it was necessary that in this garrison some one regiment should be the first to declare and carry the others with it, the 82nd of the line was summoned to Rennes. Colonel Pinoteau, its commander, an able man, active and brave, but excitable under a phlegmatic exterior, was a creature of Bernadotte's and one of the most eager leaders of the conspiracy. He undertook to arrange that his regiment, in which he was very popular, should be the first to declare.

All was ready for the explosion when Bernadotte's resolution failed. He wished, like a true Gascon, to get his chestnuts out of the fire with a cat's paw. So he persuaded General Simon and the principal conspirators that it was indispensable for him, in order that he might be in a position to seize the reins of government on the spot, after conferring with Moreau and concerting plans on this important subject, to be in Paris at the moment when the deposition of the Consuls was proclaimed by the Army of Brittany. As a matter of fact Bernadotte wished, while reserving the power of profiting in the event of success, to avoid being compromised if the thing was a failure; and General Simon, no less than the other conspirators, was short-sighted enough not to see through the scheme. The day for the rising was therefore agreed upon, and he who had planned it and ought to have taken the lead was clever enough to get out of the way.

Before Bernadotte's departure for Paris, a proclamation was drawn up, addressed to the people as well as to the army; many thousands of copies, got ready beforehand, were to be posted up on the eventful day. A bookseller of Rennes, to whom the secret of the conspirators had been imparted by General Simon and by Fourcart, undertook to print this proclamation himself. This was well to secure the prompt publication of it in Brittany. Bernadotte, however, desired to have a large number of copies of it in Paris, as it was

important to publish it in the capital and throughout the provinces the moment that the Army of the West had raised the standard of revolt. There was, however, some danger in applying to a Paris printer; so Bernadotte, in order to have a number of the proclamations at hand without compromising himself, adopted the following course. He told my brother Adolphe (for whom he had just got a commission as lieutenant in the Legion of the Loire[1]) that he had his authority to accompany him to the capital, and that, as their stay there would be long, he advised him to bring his horse and dog-cart. My brother was delighted. He filled the 'boot' of his vehicle with luggage of all kinds, and entrusted the transport of it to his servant, who was to come by short stages, while Adolphe went off in the coach. As soon as my brother had started, General Simon and Major Fourcart stopped the servant on some pretence or other, opened the boot of the dog-cart, and took out the luggage, replacing it with parcels of the proclamation; then, having shut everything up again, they sent poor Joseph on his way, not dreaming what sort of luggage he was conveying.

Meanwhile the First Consul's police, which was just beginning to be well organised, had got wind of some plot going forward in the Army of Brittany, though they knew neither its objects nor the movers in it. The Minister of Police thought it his duty to warn the Prefect of Rennes, M. Mounier, who had been a famous orator in the Constituent Assembly. By an extraordinary chance the prefect received the despatch the very day the conspiracy was to break out at Rennes during parade. It was fixed for noon, and the time was now half-past eleven. M. Mounier, to whom the Minister had not been able to give any precise information, thought that in order to obtain it he could not do better in the absence of the commander-in-chief than to apply to the staff. He sent word, therefore, to General Simon, begging him to come to his house, and showed him the Minister's despatch. General Simon, believing that everything was discovered, lost his head like any child, and told the prefect that in fact there did exist a widespread conspiracy in the army, that unhappily he had taken part in it, but that he now regretted it. Then, if you please, he unfolds the whole plan of the conspirators, names their leaders, and adds that in a few moments the troops assembled on the drill-ground are at a signal given by

[1] [Possibly a regiment of the National Guard.]

Colonel Pinoteau about to proclaim the overthrow of the Consular Government. Imagine the astonishment of M. Mounier! His position was by no means an easy one in presence of the guilty general, who, though he had been at the first moment bewildered, might come back to his senses and recollect that he had 80,000 men under his orders, of whom 8,000 or 10,000 were at that moment massed not far from the prefecture. The position of M. Mounier was most critical. He got out of it cleverly.

General Virion, of the gendarmerie, had been charged by the Government with the formation at Rennes of a body of infantry gendarmes, towards which every regiment of the army had contributed some grenadiers. These soldiers, having no common bond of union, were consequently outside the influence of the colonels of the line, and recognised only the orders of their new chiefs, the officers of gendarmerie, who were themselves, according to the regulations, under the orders of the prefect. M. Mounier, therefore, sent instructions at once to General Virion, bidding him bring up all the gendarmes. Meanwhile, fearing lest General Simon should change his mind and should get away and put himself at the head of the troops, he coaxed him over with fair words, assuring him that his repentance and his confession would extenuate his fault in the eyes of the First Consul, and bade him surrender his sword and repair to the Tour Labat, escorted by the gendarmes, who at that moment arrived in the court. There, then, was the chief mover of the revolt in prison. While this was taking place at the prefecture, the troops of the line, massed on the drill-ground, were awaiting the hour of parade, which was also to be that of revolt. All the colonels were in the secret and had promised their assistance, except M. Godard of the 79th, and they hoped to see him follow the movement.

On what small things do the destinies of empires turn! Colonel Pinoteau, a thoroughly determined man, was to give the signal, and his regiment, the 82nd, already drawn up in line, was impatiently awaiting it; but Pinoteau, in combination with Fourcart, had been busy all the morning arranging for sending out the proclamations, and while thus preoccupied he had forgotten to shave himself. Noon struck. Colonel Pinoteau, on the point of starting for parade, perceived that his beard was not shaved, and hastened to do it; but while he was proceeding to this operation, General Virion, accompanied by a large number of gendarmerie officers, entered the room hurriedly, seized his sword, and, informing him that he

was a prisoner, had him taken off to the tower where General Simon already was. A few minutes' delay and Colonel Pinoteau would have found himself at the head of 10,000 men, would certainly not have let himself be intimidated by the capture of General Simon, and would have accomplished his plan of revolt against the Consular Government; but he was surprised by General Virion, and what could he do? He had perforce to yield.

After making this second arrest General Virion and the prefect despatched an aide-de-camp to the drill-ground, with orders to tell Colonel Godard of the 79th that they had a message from the First Consul to communicate to him at once. As soon as he joined them they told him of the discovery of the conspiracy, and of the arrests of General Simon and Colonel Pinoteau, and bade him unite with them to suppress the rebellion. Colonel Godard undertook the duty, returned to the drill-ground without letting anyone know what had just been imparted to him, gave his regiment the order to march on their right flank, and brought them to the Tour Labat, where he joined the gendarme battalions who were guarding it. There he found also General Virion and the prefect, who were causing cartridges to be distributed to the loyal troops, and they awaited the upshot of events.

Meanwhile, the officers of the regiments who were stationed on the drill-ground, astonished at the sudden departure of the 79th, and not able to conceive what was delaying Colonel Pinoteau, sent to his quarters, and learnt that he had just been taken to the tower. They were at the same time informed of the arrest of General Simon. The sensation was great. The officers of the various regiments held a consultation; Major Fourcart proposed to march at once and release the two prisoners, and afterwards to carry out the movement agreed on. The proposal was received with acclamation, especially by the 82nd, who adored Pinoteau. They hastened to the Tour Labat, but found it surrounded by 4,000 gendarmes and the battalions of the 79th. The assailants were no doubt more in number, but they had no cartridges, and even if they had had any, it would have been distasteful to many of them to fire on their comrades for the sake of merely bringing about a change of persons in the established Government. General Virion and the prefect harangued them, bidding them return to their duty. The soldiers wavered, and the leaders, seeing this, did not venture to give the signal for an attack with the bayonet, the only available means of action. The regiments

fell out gradually and retired to their barracks. Major Fourcart remained alone, and was taken to the tower; the poor printer also.

On learning that the insurrection at Rennes had been abortive, all the officers in the other regiments of the Army of Italy disavowed it; but the First Consul was not taken in by their protestations. He hurried on their embarkation for San Domingo, where nearly all came to their end either in battle or through the yellow fever.

Immediately on hearing General Simon's confession, although victory was not yet secure, M. Mounier had sent off an express messenger to the Government, and the First Consul debated whether he should have Bernadotte and Moreau arrested. He postponed this step for want of evidence, but in order to get it he gave orders that all travellers coming from Italy should be searched. While this was going on, the worthy Joseph arrived tranquilly at Versailles in my brother's dog-cart, and great was his surprise when he found himself collared by the gendarmes, and in spite of his protestations taken off to the Ministry of Police. You may suppose that on learning that the carriage which this man had brought belonged to one of Bernadotte's aides-de-camp, Fouché very soon had the boot opened. He found it full of proclamations, in which Bernadotte and Moreau, after speaking of the First Consul in very strong terms, announced his fall and their own accession to power. Bonaparte was furious, and sent for the two generals. Moreau said that he had no authority over the Army of the West, and declined all responsibility for the conduct of the regiments composing it. This objection, it must be admitted, had some force; but it made Bernadotte's position all the worse, since he, as commander-in-chief over all the troops in Brittany, was responsible for the maintenance of good order among them. Nevertheless, not only had his army conspired, but his chief of the staff was the manager of the undertaking, the rebel proclamations were signed 'Bernadotte,' and more than a thousand copies had just been seized in the carriage of his aide-de-camp. The First Consul thought that such clear evidence would crush and overwhelm Bernadotte, but he had to do with a trebly-dyed Gascon as cunning as any three. Bernadotte professed surprise and indignation; 'he knew nothing of it, absolutely nothing. General Simon was a scoundrel, and Pinoteau another. He defied anyone to show him the original of the proclamation signed in his own hand. Was

it any fault of his if some crazy fools had had his name printed beneath a proclamation? He disavowed it and the guilty authors of all these proceedings from the bottom of his soul, and yielded to no one in demanding their punishment.'

In point of fact Bernadotte had been clever enough to let General Simon conduct the whole business without putting into his hands a single word of writing which might compromise himself; thus reserving to himself the power of denying everything in the event of the conspiracy failing and General Simon accusing him of having had a share in it. The First Consul, though convinced of Bernadotte's guilt, had only half-proofs, and upon these his council of Ministers judged that it was impossible to base an indictment against a commander-in-chief whose name was very popular in the country and in the army. In the case of my brother Adolphe they were less particular. One fine night he was arrested in my mother's house, at a moment when she was already overwhelmed with grief. Her eldest brother, M. de Canrobert, who had been living quietly with her, had been imprisoned in the Temple upon a charge brought by some police agents of having been present at meetings held with a view of re-establishing the old Government. My mother was busied in taking all possible steps to prove his innocence when another and more terrible disaster befell her.

My two young brothers were being educated at the *Prytanée Français*. This establishment owned a large park and a country house at the village of Vanves, not far from the bank of the Seine, and during the summer the pupils used to go there for a few days' holiday. Those who had behaved well were allowed to bathe in the river. Now it happened that one week, on account of some schoolboy misdemeanour, the principal issued a general prohibition of bathing. My brother Theodore was passionately fond of this sport, so he and some others of his schoolfellows decided to enjoy it without the knowledge of their tutors. Accordingly, while the pupils were playing about the park, they climbed the wall at an out-of-the-way spot, and ran off towards the Seine. The day was very hot, and they were streaming with perspiration when they leapt into the stream. Hardly were they in the water when they heard the drum beat for dinner. Fearing that their absence from the dining-room would reveal their escapade, they dressed in all haste, ran back, climbed the wall again, and arrived panting just as dinner was beginning. In these circumstances they would have done well to eat little or nothing; but

schoolboys do not think of such things. They made a hearty meal as usual, and were all taken seriously ill—Theodore worst of all. He was seized with violent inflammation, and carried to his mother's house in a hopeless state, and it was while she was going from the bedside of her dying son to the prison of her brother that they arrested her eldest son. As a final stroke of disaster, poor Theodore died. He was eighteen years old, an excellent lad, his disposition as gentle as his frame was fine. I was deeply grieved to hear of his death, for I loved him dearly. The disasters which fell in succession on my mother led those who had been my father's truest friends to take all the more interest in her. First among these was the kind M. Defermon, who was working almost every day with the First Consul, and never lost an opportunity of interceding for Adolphe, and more especially for his mother in her trouble. Finally, Bonaparte replied one day that though he had no very high opinion of Bernadotte's good sense he did not believe him to be so devoid of judgment as to take a lieutenant twenty-one years old into his confidence when conspiring against the Government. Moreover, General Simon had declared that it was he and Major Fourcart who had put the proclamations into the boot of young Marbot's dog-cart. Consequently, if he were to blame he could not be very seriously so, but that he himself did not intend to release Bernadotte's aide-de-camp until Bernadotte came in person to request it.

On learning Bonaparte's resolve my mother hastened to Bernadotte to entreat him to comply with this condition. He promised faithfully to do so, but days and weeks went by and he did nothing. Finally, he said to my mother, 'It will cost me a great deal to do what you ask, but no matter; I owe thus much to the memory of your husband, and to the interest which I feel towards your children. I will go this very evening to the First Consul, and call upon you when I leave the Tuileries. I feel certain that I shall at last be able to announce to you the release of your son.' It may be imagined with what impatience my mother waited during this long day, her heart beating at the sound of every carriage. At last eleven o'clock struck. No Bernadotte appeared. My mother went to his house and learned that Bernadotte and his wife had just started for Plombières, and were not expected back for two months. For all his promise, Bernadotte had left Paris without seeing the First Consul! My mother, in her despair, wrote to General Bonaparte. M. Defermon undertook to deliver the letter; and in his indignation at Berna-

dotte's conduct he could not refrain from recounting his behaviour towards us. Bonaparte exclaimed, 'Bernadotte all over!'

M. Defermon and Generals Montier, Lefebvre, and Murat pressed strongly for my brother's release, pointing out that if he had known nothing of the conspiracy it was unjust to keep him in prison, while if he had had any knowledge of it he could not be required to inform against Bernadotte, whose aide-de-camp he was. The First Consul was struck by these arguments, restored my brother's liberty, and sent him to join the 49th Regiment at Cherbourg, not choosing that he should be Bernadotte's aide-de-camp any longer; but probably, with the mnemonic system peculiar to himself, he entered in his head the words, 'Marbot, aide-de-camp to Bernadotte—Rennes conspiracy.' Anyhow, my brother never got back into favour with him, and some time later he was sent to Pondicherry.

Adolphe had passed a month in prison: Major Fourcart remained there a year, was cashiered, and ordered to leave France. He took refuge in Holland, where he lived for thirty years in a state of penury, reduced to giving lessons in French. Ultimately, in 1832, he thought of returning to his country, and one day during the siege of Antwerp, I saw a kind of threadbare old schoolmaster enter my room, whom I recognised as Fourcart. He confessed that he had not a sixpence. While offering to help him I could not refrain from philosophic reflections on the strange ways of fortune. There was a man who in 1802 was already a major, and whom his courage, combined with his ability, would certainly have advanced to the rank of general if it had not occurred to Colonel Pinoteau to shave himself at the moment when the conspiracy of Rennes was on the point of breaking out! I brought Fourcart to Marshal Gérard, who also remembered him; we introduced him to the Duke of Orleans, who was good enough to give him a post in his library, with a salary of 2,400 francs. He lived fifteen years there.

As for General Simon and Colonel Pinoteau, they were sent to the island of Ré and confined there five or six years, until Bonaparte, on becoming emperor, set them free. Pinoteau vegetated a little time at Ruffec, his native town, until the Emperor, on his way to Spain in 1808, halted there to change horses. Colonel Pinoteau presented himself without flinching, and demanded to re-enter the service. The Emperor, knowing that he was an excellent officer, put him in command of a regiment. The admirable way in which he led

this during the Spanish war earned him, after several campaigns, the rank of major-general.

General Simon also was restored to the service. He commanded a brigade of infantry in Masséna's army when we invaded Portugal in 1810. At the battle of Busaco, when Masséna made the blunder of delivering a front attack on Lord Wellington's army, posted on a height very difficult of access, poor General Simon, wishing to wipe out his fault and recover the time which he had lost to his promotion, dashed forward bravely at the head of his brigade, cleared all the obstacles, climbed the rocks under a hail of bullets, broke the English line, and was the first to enter the enemy's entrenchments. There, however, a shot fired point blank smashed his jaw, just at the moment when the English second line repulsed our troops, who were hurled back into the valley with considerable loss. The unfortunate general was found lying in the redoubt among the dead and dying, with scarcely a human feature left. Wellington treated him with much kindness, and as soon as he was fit to be moved, sent him as a prisoner of war to England. Later on he was allowed to return to France, but his horrible wound did not permit him to serve again. The Emperor gave him a pension, and nothing more was heard of him.

CHAPTER XVI.

While I was going through the course of the cavalry school great events were toward in Europe. England having been led by jealousy of the prosperity of France to break the Peace of Amiens,[1] hostilities recommenced. The First Consul determined to push them actively forward by transporting an army to the soil of Great Britain—a daring operation, very difficult, but still not impossible. In order to carry it out, Napoleon, who had just seized Hanover, the special patrimony of England, formed several army corps on the coast of the North Sea and the Channel. He ordered an immense quantity of pinnaces and flat-bottomed boats for the embarkation of the troops to be built and collected at Boulogne and the neighbouring ports.

All the military world being stirred to activity for this war, I regretted that I could not take a share in it, and I understood what a false position I should be placed in at the renewal of hostilities. For, destined as I was to convey to my regiment the instruction which I had acquired in the cavalry school, I saw myself condemned to pass years at a depôt, whip in hand, making recruits trot on old horses, while my comrades were serving at the head of the troopers whom I had trained. The prospect was not very agreeable; but how was I to change? A regiment must always be supplied by recruits, and it was certain that my colonel, having sent me to the cavalry school in order to learn to drill recruits, would not deprive himself of the services which I could render in this kind, and would exclude me from his fighting squadrons. I was in this perplexity, when one day, as I was walking at the end of the Avenue of Paris with a book on the Theory in my hand, a bright idea occurred to me which

[1] [The question with whom rested the blame for the rupture of the short peace is one too complicated to be discussed here. Whether or not the technical fault was with England, readers of this book will probably admit that until Napoleon was crushed no permanent peace was possible.]

totally changed my destiny and aided vastly to raise me to the rank which I hold.

I had just learnt that the First Consul, having fault to find with the Court of Lisbon, had given orders to form at Bayonne an army corps which was intended to enter Portugal under Augereau as commander-in-chief. I knew that this general owed his promotion partly to my father, under whom he had served at the camp of Toulon and in the Pyrenees; and although the experience which I had gained at Genoa after my father's death was not calculated to give me a good opinion of man's gratitude, I resolved to write to Augereau informing him of my position, and begging him to deliver me from it by taking me for one of his aides-de-camp. I wrote my letter and sent it to my mother to obtain her approval. She not only assented, but, knowing that Augereau was in Paris, kindly took it to him herself. Augereau received the widow of his friend with the utmost courtesy; he at once drove off to the Minister of War, and that very evening brought to my mother my appointment as aide-de-camp. Thus was fulfilled the wish which four-and-twenty hours before I had considered a dream. The next day I hastened to thank the general; he received me most kindly, and ordered me to come and join him as soon as possible at Bayonne, whither he was proceeding immediately. It was the month of October, so that I had finished the first course at the cavalry school; and, having little curiosity to pursue the second, I left Versailles with joy. I had a presentiment that I was starting in a new direction, and one much more profitable than that of regimental instructor; nor was I deceived, for nine years later I was colonel, while my comrades whom I had left at the school had scarcely got their troops.

I repaired promptly to Bayonne, where I took up my duty as aide-de-camp to the commander-in-chief. He was occupying the fine château of Marac, not far from the town, where some years afterwards the Emperor resided. I was well received by the general and by my new comrades his aides-de-camp, who had nearly all served under my father. This staff, although it did not give so many general officers to the army as that of Bernadotte, was very well composed. General Donzelot, chief of the staff, was a very capable man, and afterwards became governor of the Ionian Islands, and then of Martinique. The deputy chief of the staff was named Colonel Albert; he died a general, and aide-de-camp to the Duke of Orleans. The aides were Colonel Sicard, who was killed at Heilsberg,

Major Brame, and Major Massy, who was killed when colonel at the Moskowa; Captain Chévetel, and Lieutenant Mainvielle; I was the sixth and the junior. The staff was completed by Dr. Raymond, an excellent practitioner and a most honourable man, who was of great assistance to me at the battle of Eylau. The marshal's half-brother, Colonel Augereau, accompanied the staff. He was a kindly man, who afterwards became lieutenant-general.

I must now give some account of Marshal Augereau's history. Most of the generals who became celebrated in the early wars of the Revolution rose from the lower ranks of society; but it is wrong to imagine, as some have done, that they were without education and owed their success to nothing but their brilliant courage. Augereau especially has been much misjudged. People have thought fit to represent him as a kind of rough, noisy, ill-conditioned swashbuckler. This is a mistake; for, although his youth was pretty stormy, and though he fell into sundry errors in politics, he was kind, well-mannered, and affectionate. I can assert that of the five marshals under whom I served he was distinctly the one who did most to alleviate the evils of war, who showed most kindness to non-combatants, and treated his officers the best, living with them like a father among his children. He had an extremely disturbed life, but before judging him one must consider the manners and customs of the period.

Pierre Augereau was born in Paris in 1757. His father did a large business as a fruiterer, and had amassed a sufficient fortune to enable him to educate his children well. His mother was a native of Munich, and she had the good sense always to speak German to her son, so that he spoke it perfectly, which both in his travels and in war was of great use to him. Augereau was a handsome man, tall and well built. He was fond of all physical exercises, and a proficient at them: a good rider, and an excellent swordsman. At the age of seventeen he lost his mother, and her brother, who was one of the secretaries of 'Monsieur,' obtained his enlistment in the carabineers, of which that prince was proprietary colonel. He passed some years at Saumur, the regular garrison of the carabineers. His attention to duty and his good conduct soon raised him to the rank of non-commissioned officer. Unfortunately, at that time there was a craze for duelling, and Augereau's reputation as an excellent fencer compelled him to fight often, for among the garrison it was the correct

thing to allow no superior. Noblemen, officers, soldiers, used to fight on the most futile grounds. Thus it happened that on one occasion, when Augereau was on a long leave in Paris, the celebrated fencing-master Saint-Georges, seeing him pass, said in the presence of several swordsmen that 'there went one of the best blades in France.' Thereupon a sergeant of dragoons named Belair, who claimed to be the next best to Saint-Georges, wrote to Augereau that he would like to fight him unless the other would admit his superiority. Augereau answered that he would do nothing of the sort, so they met in the Champs Elysées, and Belair got a thrust right through the body. He recovered, and, having left the service, married and became the father of eight children. In the early days of the Empire, being at a loss how to feed them, it occurred to him to apply to his old adversary, now become a marshal. I knew the man; he was witty and gay in a very original fashion. He called upon Augereau with a fiddle under his arm, and said that, having nothing to give his eight children for dinner, he was going to make them dance to keep up their spirits unless the marshal would kindly give him the means of supplying them with more substantial nourishment. Augereau recognised Belair, asked him to dinner, gave him money, and in a few days obtained him a very good post in the Government Parcels Office, and got two of his sons into a *lycée*. This conduct needs no remark.

All Augereau's duels did not end thus. According to a most absurd usage, ancient feuds existed between certain regiments, the cause of which was often pretty much forgotten, but which were handed down from one generation to another, and gave rise to duels whenever those corps met. Thus the Lunéville gendarmes and the carabineers had been at war for more than half a century, although in all this period they had not seen each other. At last, at the beginning of Louis XVI.'s reign, these two bodies were summoned to the camp at Compiègne; so to show that they were no less brave than their predecessors, carabineers and gendarmes resolved to fight, and the custom was of such ancient date that the chiefs felt bound to wink at it. However, in order to avoid too great bloodshed, they contrived to make a regulation that there should be only one duel. Each corps was to appoint a combatant to represent it, and after that there should be a truce. As the self-esteem of each side required that the selected champion should be victorious, the carabineers picked out their twelve best swordsmen, Augereau being among them, and it was agreed to choose

by lot the one to whom the honour of the regiment should be entrusted. The lot was that day even blinder than usual, for it fell upon a sergeant named Donnadieu who had five children. Augereau remarked that they ought not to have put among the papers one bearing the name of a father of a family, and demanded to act as his substitute. Donnadieu declared that as the lot had fallen on him he would go out; Augereau insisted. At last the generous contest was terminated by the meeting accepting Augereau's proposal. They soon learnt who was the combatant chosen by the gendarmes, and it only remained to bring the adversaries together, so that a shadow of a quarrel might furnish a pretext for the meeting.

Augereau's adversary was a terrible man, an excellent swordsman and a professional duellist, who, to keep his hand in while waiting, had in the previous day killed two sergeants of the Garde Française. Augereau, without letting himself be frightened by this bully's reputation, went off to the café, where he knew that he would come, and sat down at a table to wait for him. The gendarme entered, and as soon as the carabineers' champion was pointed out to him he turned up his coat-tails and sat down insolently on the table with his hind-quarters a foot from Augereau's face. The latter was at this moment taking a cup of very hot coffee; he gently opened the slit which in those days existed in the waistband of the leather breeches worn by the cavalry, and poured the scalding liquid upon the person of the impertinent gendarme. The man turned round in a fury. The quarrel was started, and they went off to the ground, followed by a crowd of carabineers and gendarmes. On the way the gendarme, by way of a ferocious raillery of his intended victim, asked Augereau in a jeering tone, 'Would you rather be buried in the town or in the country?' Augereau replied, 'I prefer the country, I have always liked the open air.' 'Very good,' said the gendarme, turning to his second, 'you may put him beside the two whom I packed off yesterday and the day before.' This was not very encouraging, and might have shaken the nerves of another than Augereau. It was not so with him. Resolved to defend his life to the best of his power, he played so close and so well that his adversary, enraged at being unable to touch him, lost his temper and blundered. Augereau, always calm, profited by this to run him through, remarking, 'You shall be buried in the country.'

When the camp was broken up the carabineers returned to Saumur, where Augereau continued to serve quietly until a disastrous event drove him into a life of adventure. A young

officer of high birth and very hasty temper, happening to find some fault with the manner in which the horses were groomed, fell foul of Augereau, and in a fit of anger offered to strike him with his whip in presence of the whole squadron. Augereau replied to the insult by sending the imprudent officer's whip flying from his hand. In a rage he drew his sword and attacked Augereau, saying, 'Defend yourself!' Augereau at first confined himself to parrying, but, having been wounded, he at length returned a thrust, and the officer fell dead. General Count de Malseigne, who commanded the carabineers as deputy for 'Monsieur,' was soon informed of this affair; and although the eye-witnesses with one accord testified that Augereau had been most unjustly provoked, and that it was a case of lawful self-defence, the interest which he took in Augereau led him to think it advisable to get him out of the way. He therefore summoned a soldier named Papon, a native of Geneva, whose time expired in a few days, and asked him to let Augereau have his paper of discharge, promising him another shortly. Papon agreed, for which Augereau was always most grateful to him. Having reached Geneva, he learnt that in spite of the evidence a court-martial had condemned him to death for having drawn his sword on an officer.

The Papon family exported watches largely to the East. Augereau resolved to accompany the clerk who was sent in charge of them, and thus visited Greece, the Ionian Islands, Constantinople, and the shores of the Black Sea. When he was in the Crimea a Russian colonel, judging from his fine bearing that he had been a soldier, offered him the rank of sergeant. Augereau accepted, and passed some years in the Russian army, serving under Souvaroff against the Turks, and being wounded at the assault on Ismail. Peace having been made between Russia and the Porte, Augerea 's regiment was ordered to Poland; but, not caring to stay longer among the Russians, half-barbarous as they were, he deserted and reached Prussia. There he took service, at first in Prince Henry's regiment; later on his stature and his pleasing countenance gained him admission into Frederick the Great's celebrated regiment of guards. He was there for two years, and his captain held out hopes of promotion to him, when one day the King, reviewing his guards, stopped in front of Augereau. 'There is a fine grenadier: what countryman is he?' said the King. 'A Frenchman, sir.' 'So much the worse,' replied Frederick, who had come to hate the French as much as he

once liked them; 'so much the worse. If he had been a Swiss or a German, we might have made something of him.'

After this assurance from the King's mouth that he would never come to anything in Prussia he decided to leave the country: not an easy thing to do, for every desertion was signalled by a cannon-shot, and the populace at once pursued in order to get the reward, while the deserter when taken was shot. To avoid this misfortune and regain his liberty, Augereau, knowing well that a good third of the guards who were foreigners like himself longed for nothing better than to get out of Prussia, got speech of some sixty of the boldest, and pointed out that if they deserted individually they were lost, as two or three men were quite able to arrest one. The right thing was for them all to go off together with arms and ammunition, so as to be able to defend themselves. They acted accordingly, Augereau taking command. Though attacked on the road by the peasants, and even by a detachment of soldiers, these determined men, with loss of some of their numbers, but with greater loss to their assailants, reached in one night a small place belonging to Saxony, not more than ten leagues from Potsdam.[1] Augereau went on to Dresden, where he gave dancing and fencing lessons until the birth of Louis XVI.'s eldest son. The French Government celebrated this event by an amnesty to all deserters, which enabled Augereau not only to return to Paris, but also to re-enter the carabineers. His sentence was quashed, and General de Malseigne claimed him back as one of the best sergeants in the regiment. Augereau thus recovered his rank and his position. In 1788 the King of Naples, feeling the necessity of reform in his army, asked the King of France to send him as instructors some officers and non-commissioned officers, promising them an advance in rank. Augereau was among those selected, and on arriving in Naples received the rank of sub-lieutenant. He served there several years, and had just become lieutenant, when he fell in love with the daughter of a Greek merchant. The father being unwilling to agree to his proposal, they got secretly married; then, going on board the first ship that they found starting, they went to Lisbon, where they lived quietly for some time.

By the end of 1792 the French Revolution had made great progress, and all the sovereigns of Europe, dreading to see the

[1] [The northern frontier of the Electorate of Saxony reached at that time to within a very short distance of Potsdam.]

new principles introduced into their states, began to take severe measures towards Frenchmen. Augereau has often told me that during his stay in Portugal he had never said or done anything which could alarm the Government; nevertheless he was arrested and imprisoned by the Inquisition. He had lain some months in prison, when Madame Augereau saw one day a ship enter the port with a tricolour flag; she went on board and handed to the captain a letter informing the French Government of her husband's arbitrary arrest. The French skipper did not belong to the navy, but nevertheless he went boldly to the Portuguese Ministers, claimed his compatriot who was detained by the Inquisition, and on their refusal to give him up declared war upon them in the name of France. Whether it was that the Portuguese were frightened or that they understood the injustice of their action, Augereau was released, and with his wife returned to Havre in the brave skipper's vessel.

On arriving in Paris Augereau was promoted captain and sent to La Vendée. There, by his advice and his courage, he saved the army of the incapable General Ronsin, earning thereby the rank of major. Sick of fighting against Frenchmen, he asked permission to go to the Pyrenees, and was sent to the camp at Toulouse, then commanded by my father, who, struck with the way in which he performed his duty, got him the post of divisional-adjutant with colonel's rank and showed him much kindness, which Augereau never forgot. As general he distinguished himself in the wars in Spain and in Italy, especially at Castiglione. On the eve of this battle the French army was surrounded on all sides, and in a very critical position. Bonaparte, who was commanding in chief, summoned a council of war for the only time in his life. All the generals, even Masséna, were in favour of retreating, until Augereau, pointing out the way of escaping from the difficulty, ended by saying: 'Were you all to go, I shall remain, and with my division shall attack the enemy at daybreak.' Bonaparte, struck by Augereau's arguments, said, 'Very well, I will stay with you.' After that there was no more talk of retreat, and on the morrow a brilliant victory, due in great part to the valour and the fine tactics of Augereau, assured the position of the French army in Italy for a long time. So it was that when certain jealous tongues thought fit to slander Augereau in the presence of the Emperor, he answered, 'Let us not forget that he saved us at Castiglione,' and when he created his new nobility he named Augereau Duke of Castiglione.

On the death of General Hoche Augereau took his place

with the Army of the Rhine, and after the establishment of the Consulate he was put in command of the Gallo-Batavian Army, composed of French and Dutch troops, with which he fought the campaign of 1800 in Franconia, and won the battle of Burg-Eberach. After the Peace he bought the estate and château of La Houssaye. With reference to this purchase, I may say that there has been much exaggeration of the fortunes made by some generals of the Army of Italy. After drawing for twenty years the pay of commander-in-chief or marshal, and enjoying for seven years an annuity of 200,000 francs, and a salary of 25,300 francs with the Legion of Honour, Augereau left at his death only the capital of 48,000 francs a year. Never was man more generous, more disinterested, more ready to do a kindness. I could quote many instances of it, but I will confine myself to two.

After his elevation to the Consulate General Bonaparte formed a numerous guard, the infantry of which he placed under the command of General Lannes. He, though a most distinguished soldier, had no idea of administration; so, instead of keeping to the established rate for the purchase of cloth, linen, and such-like, thought that nothing could be good enough for his men. Consequently the officials of the clothing department, delighted at being able to deal with the purveyors by private contract in order to obtain their commissions, and further, thinking that the name of General Lannes, friend of the First Consul, would cover any amount of plundering, designed the uniforms in such luxurious style that when it came to paying the bills they were found to be 300,000 francs in excess of the sum allowed by the official regulations. The First Consul, who had resolved to bring the finances into order, and to compel the commanders of regiments not to exceed the credits sanctioned, was determined to make an example. Fond as he was of Lannes, and though convinced that not a centime had got into his pocket, he declared him responsible for the deficit of 300,000 francs, and allowed him only eight days to pay this sum into the regimental chest, under pain of being brought before a court-martial. This severe decision produced an excellent effect, putting a stop to the waste which had been going on in regimental expenditure. But Lannes, although recently married to the daughter of Senator Guéhéneuc, found it impossible to pay. Then Augereau, learning his friend's awkward position, hurried to his solicitor, got 300,000 francs, and told his secre-

tary to pay them in the name of General Lannes into the regimental chest of the Guard. The First Consul, when he heard of this, was most grateful to Augereau, and in order to put Lannes in a position to be able to discharge his debt he gave him the very well-paid embassy to Lisbon.

Another instance of Augereau's generosity was the following. Bernadotte, with whom he was not very intimate, had bought the estate of Lagrange. He had reckoned on paying it out of his wife's dowry; but there was some delay in obtaining this in full, and the vendors pressed for payment. He therefore asked Augereau to lend him 200,000 francs for five years, which Augereau agreed to do. Madame Bernadotte bethought her of asking what interest he would require. 'Madam,' answered Augereau, 'bankers and moneylenders, no doubt quite rightly, draw profit from the money which they lend; but when a marshal is fortunate enough to be able to oblige a comrade, the pleasure of doing him a service is interest enough for him.' That was the man who has been represented as hard and grasping. I will not at the present moment relate any more of his life; the rest of his career will be told as I go along; and having made known his good qualities, I shall not conceal his faults.

CHAPTER XVII.

Let us return to Bayonne, where I had just joined Augereau's staff. The winter in those parts is very mild, so that the troops in camp were able to manœuvre and have sham fights, to practise us for our coming battles with the Portuguese. But the Court of Lisbon fell in with the views of the French Government on all points; so we had no occasion to cross the Pyrenees, and Augereau was ordered to Brest, there to take command of the 7th corps of the Coast Army, which was to bring off an invasion of Ireland.

General Augereau's first wife, the Greek lady, was then at Pau, and, wishing to take leave of her, he went thither with three aides-de-camp, I being one. At that time, commanders-in-chief had each his squadron of *guides*, by a detachment of whom their carriages were constantly escorted so long as they were in the district occupied by troops under their command. There being as yet no *guides* at Bayonne, their place was supplied by posting a detachment of cavalry at every station between Bayonne and Pau. This duty was done by my late regiment, the 25th Chasseurs; so that as I sat at my ease in the commander-in-chief's carriage I could see my former comrades trotting by the side of it. This did not excite my vanity, but I admit that on entering Puyoo, where two years ago you saw me come in on foot, all muddy, and escorted by gendarmes, I could not help swaggering a little to attract the recognition of the good mayor Bordenave. I introduced him to the commander-in-chief, to whom I had already related what had befallen me in this parish in 1801, and as the escort as far as Puyoo had been joined by the gendarmerie force from Peyrehorade, I recognised the two gendarmes who had arrested me. The old mayor mischievously told them that the officer whom they saw in the commander-in-chief's fine coach was the same traveller as they had taken up for a deserter in spite of his papers being in order; the good man was indeed very proud of the judgment which he had given on that occasion.

We stayed twenty-four hours at Pau, and returned to

Bayonne, whence the general despatched Mainvielle and me to Brest to get his quarters ready. We travelled by the mail as far as Bordeaux, but from that point there were no public conveyances, and we were obliged to bestride post-horses, which, of all ways of travelling, is certainly the roughest. It rained, the roads were fearful, the nights pitch-dark, and still we had to gallop ahead in spite of these hindrances, for our mission was urgent. I have never been a first-rate rider, but my practice on horseback and the year that I had just passed at the Versailles riding-school gave me sufficient confidence to enable me to push along the frightful screws which we were obliged to ride. I got pretty well therefore through my apprenticeship to the trade of mounted messenger, which you will see that I was forced by circumstances later on to learn thoroughly. Mainvielle was not so well off, so that it took us two days and two nights to reach Nantes, where he arrived utterly broken down and unable to ride post any farther. However, as we could not allow the commander-in-chief to find himself without lodging on his arrival at Brest, it was arranged that I should go on to that town, and that Mainvielle should rejoin me by carriage. On arriving I hired the house of the banker Pasquier, the brother of the former Chancellor and President of the Upper House. My comrades, including Mainvielle, soon joined me and helped me to arrange the commander-in-chief's establishment in a way that seemed suitable for the state in which he proposed to keep house. The beginning of the year 1804 found us at Brest. Our army corps consisted of two divisions of infantry and a brigade of cavalry; the troops were not encamped, but billeted in the neighbouring villages, the generals and their staffs lodging in Brest. In the roads and the harbour were many vessels of every class; with officers of the army and the navy, Brest presented a lively scene. Admiral Truguet and General Augereau gave many brilliant parties, after the immemorial custom of the French when preparing for war.

During February Augereau was summoned to Paris by the First Consul to confer upon the plan of invading Ireland; I travelled with him. On reaching Paris we found the political horizon very stormy. The Bourbons, who had hoped that Bonaparte, after seizing the reins of government, would work in their cause and get ready to play the part of Monk, when they saw that he had no idea of restoring the Crown to them, resolved to overthrow him. To this end they planned

a conspiracy, the leaders of which were three men, all celebrated, but with very different titles to celebrity—General Pichegru, General Moreau, and Georges Cadoudal. Pichegru had been Bonaparte's mathematical tutor at the college of Brienne, and had left it to take service. When the Revolution broke out he was sergeant of artillery; his talents and his courage soon raised him to the command of an army. It was he who conquered Holland in the middle of winter; but his ambition was his ruin. He allowed himself to be inveigled by the agents of the Prince of Condé, and kept up a correspondence with the prince, who promised him great advancement and the title of Constable if he would use his influence with the troops towards replacing Louis XVII. on the throne of his fathers. Chance, that great arbiter of men's destinies, would have it that after a fight, in which the French troops under Moreau had beaten the division of the Austrian General Klinglin, the baggage wagon of the latter containing letters addressed by Pichegru to the Prince of Condé was captured and brought to Moreau. He was Pichegru's friend, and, in some measure, owed his promotion to him, so that as long as Pichegru was in power he concealed the fact of the capture. But when that general, being a member of the Council of Elders, had been arrested with many of his colleagues for acting on behalf of the Bourbons, Moreau lost no time in sending to the Directory the papers proving his guilt, which led to his transportation to Sinamary, in the deserts of Guiana. He contrived by dint of courage to escape, reached the United States, and then England, and, having from this time no more reason to keep up appearances, he became avowedly a paid agent of Louis XVIII., and decided to come to France to overthrow the Consular Government. However, as he could not hide from himself the fact that, having been cashiered, proscribed, and more than six years absent from France, his influence with the army could not be equal to that of Moreau, the conqueror of Hohenlinden, the favourite of the troops, and their inspector-general, he consented to hold his peace about his reasons for enmity towards Moreau, and to join with him for the triumph of the cause to which he was devoted.

Moreau, a Breton by birth, was studying law at Rennes when the Revolution of 1789 broke out. The turbulent young students chose him for their leader, and when they formed a battalion of volunteers they put Moreau in command of it. Thus, starting on the career of arms in the post of

superior officer, he showed himself brave and capable, and was soon raised to the rank of general, and to the chief command of armies. He won several battles, and executed a justly celebrated retreat before the Archduke Charles. But, good soldier as he was, Moreau lacked political courage; as we have seen, he refused to put himself at the head of the Government while Bonaparte was in Egypt, and although he aided him on the 18th Brumaire, he became jealous of his power when he saw him First Consul. He sought every means of supplanting him—urged thereto, it was said, by the jealousy of his wife and his mother-in-law towards Josephine. This being Moreau's disposition, it was likely that he would easily be brought to co-operate with Pichegru for the overthrow of the Government.

A Breton named Lajolais, an agent of Louis XVIII., and a friend of Moreau, undertook to conduct the communication between him and Pichegru, and was continually passing between London and Paris. By-and-by, however, it became clear that Moreau, while willing to aid in the overthrow of Bonaparte, was minded to hold the power himself, and by no means to hand it over to the Bourbons; and it was thought that a personal interview with Pichegru might put him in a better frame of mind. The latter accordingly was landed by an English vessel on the French coast, near Tréport, and proceeded to Paris, where he found Georges Cadoudal, M. de la Rivière, the two Polignacs, and other Royalists.

Cadoudal was son of a miller in the Morbihan, the youngest of a large family; but a quaint custom exists in part of western Brittany[1] by which the latest born takes the family property. Cadoudal's father was in easy circumstances, and he had received some education. He was of short stature, broad-shouldered, fierce as a tiger, and his daring courage had made him the chief leader of all the 'Chouans' in Brittany. Since the pacification of La Vendée he had lived in London; but his fanatical zeal for the House of Bourbon allowed him no rest so long as the First Consul was at the head of the French Government. He formed a plan of killing him, not by secret assassination, but by attacking him in open day, on the road to Saint-Cloud, with the help of a force of thirty or forty mounted and armed Chouans, disguised as soldiers of the Consular Guard. There was some chance that this plan might succeed,

[1] [And is not unknown, under the name of 'borough-English,' in the south of England. See Elton, *Origins of English History*, p. 187.]

Bonaparte at that time being, as a rule, escorted only by four troopers.

An interview was arranged between Pichegru and Moreau. It took place at night, near the then unfinished Church of the Madeleine. Moreau agreed to the overthrow, and even to the murder, of the First Consul, but would give no aid towards the restoration of the Bourbons. Bonaparte's secret police soon gave notice that some dark business was on foot in Paris, and he ordered the arrest of several old Chouans. One of these made important revelations compromising Moreau, and the Council resolved to arrest him also.

I remember that this arrest produced a very bad impression. Cadoudal and Pichegru not being as yet arrested, no one thought that they were in France, and it was said that the conspiracy had been trumped up by Bonaparte as an excuse for arresting Moreau. It was, therefore, to the interest of the Government to prove that they were in Paris, and had been in communication with him. The barriers were closed for some days, and a law of the utmost severity passed against all who sheltered the conspirators. Unable to find a hiding-place, Pichegru, M. de la Rivière, and the Polignacs soon fell into the hands of the police. Their arrest led the public to begin to believe in the conspiracy; and when Cadoudal was captured, all doubts were at an end. He admitted, when examined, that he had come to kill the First Consul, and that the plot was to have the support of a prince of the blood royal. The police were thus led to inquire the whereabouts of all the Bourbon princes. They learned that the Duke of Enghien, a descendant of the Great Condé, had been living for a short time at Ettenheim, a little town in Baden, a few leagues from the Rhine. It has never been proved that the duke was the leader of the conspiracy, though there is no doubt that he had more than once been imprudent enough to enter French territory. Be that as it may, the First Consul caused a detachment of troops, under General Ordener, to cross the Rhine under cover of night, to go to Ettenheim, and seize the Duke of Enghien. He was brought straight to Vincennes, tried, condemned, and shot, before the public had heard of his arrest. This execution was generally blamed. If the prince had been taken on French territory, the law prescribing the capital penalty in such cases might conceivably have been applied; but to carry him off from a foreign country, beyond the frontier, appeared a monstrous violation of international law.

There seems, however, reason to think that the First

Consul had not intended to execute the prince, and only wished to terrify the Royalist party; but General Savary, chief of the gendarmerie, hastened to Vincennes as soon as judgment was pronounced, took possession of the prince, and with a superabundance of zeal had him shot—in order, as he said, to deliver the First Consul from the dilemma of having either to order his death or spare the life of a dangerous enemy. Savary afterwards repudiated this remark; but I have been assured by those who were present and heard it, that he certainly made it. Nor is it less certain that Bonaparte blamed Savary for his haste; but the thing being done he had to accept the consequences.

General Pichegru, ashamed of having been in league with assassins, and unwilling that the conqueror of Holland should share the sentence of Chouan criminals, hanged himself in prison with his neckcloth. An assertion was made that he had been strangled by some of Bonaparte's mamelukes; but this was a fabrication. Moreover, it would have been a useless crime, it being rather to Bonaparte's interest to display Pichegru in disgrace before a tribunal than to kill him in private. Cadoudal, with several of his associates, was condemned to death and executed. The Polignacs and M. de la Rivière were similarly sentenced, but the penalty was commuted to imprisonment for life. They were at first shut up at Vincennes, then allowed under parole to reside in a private hospital. On the approach of the Allies in 1814 they escaped and joined the Count of Artois in Franche-Comté, and in the following year were among the bitterest in urging the prosecutions of Bonapartists. As for General Moreau, he was condemned to two years' imprisonment. The First Consul remitted his sentence, on condition of his going to the United States. He lived there in obscurity till 1813, and then returned to Europe to take his place among the enemies of his country, and to die fighting against Frenchmen,[1] thus confirming all the accusations brought against him at the time of Pichegru's conspiracy.

The French nation, weary of revolutions, and seeing how necessary Bonaparte was if order were to be maintained, forgot the odious business of the Duke of Enghien, and acclaimed Bonaparte Emperor May 25, 1804. Most Courts

[1] [In the Russian army at Dresden, September 1, 1813. In his last letter to his wife, after he received his mortal wound, he wrote: 'Ce coquin de Bonaparte a toujours été heureux.']

recognised the new sovereign. On this occasion, eighteen of the most conspicuous generals were appointed marshals of the Empire: Berthier, Augereau, Masséna, Lannes, Davout, Murat, Moncey, Jourdan, Bernadotte, Ney, Bessières, Mortier, Soult, and Brune in the active army; Kellermann, Lefebvre, Pérignon, and Sérurier in the Senate.

CHAPTER XVIII.

After Moreau's trial, we returned to Brest; but soon were back in Paris, as on July 14 the marshal had to attend the distribution of the decorations of the Legion of Honour, an order newly founded by the Emperor to reward merit of all kinds. *A propos* of this, I may recall an anecdote which went about at the time. In order that all soldiers who had distinguished themselves in the Republican armies might share in the decoration, the Emperor ordered a report of the exploits of all those who had received arms of honour,[1] and noted a good number of them for the Legion, although many had now entered civil life. M. de Narbonne, a returned *émigré*, was at that time living tranquilly at Paris, in the Rue Miromesnil, next door to my mother. On the day of the distribution of the crosses, M. de Narbonne heard that his man-servant, an old soldier of the Army of Egypt, had just been decorated. On sitting down to table he called him, and said, 'It is not proper that a knight of the Legion of Honour should hand plates; still less fitting is it that he should renounce his decoration on account of his service. Sit down by me; we will dine together; and to-morrow you shall have the place of gamekeeper on my country estate, which will not be inconsistent with your decoration.' The Emperor heard of this piece of good taste, and having long desired to know M. de Narbonne, of whose good sense and wit he had heard much, sent for him, and took to him so much that he made him his aide-de-camp. M. de Narbonne's daughter is the Countess of Rambuteau.

After distributing the crosses at Paris, the Emperor visited the camp at Boulogne for the same purpose. The army was drawn up in a semi-circle on an open space fronting the sea; it was an imposing ceremony. The Emperor appeared for the first time on a throne, surrounded by his marshals. The enthusiasm was indescribable. The English fleet, perceiving the ceremony, sent some vessels of light draught to disturb it

[1] [Cf. p. 54.]

by a cannonade; but our coast batteries replied actively. At the end of the ceremony, the Emperor, returning to Boulogne, followed by his marshals and a numerous train, halted behind the batteries, and calling General Marmont, who had served in the artillery, said: 'Let us see if we recollect our old trade, and which of us can send a shell on to that English brig which has come so close to tease us.' Then the Emperor, motioning to one side the corporal of artillery in charge of the piece, laid the mortar; they fired, and the shell, grazing the sails of the brig, fell into the sea. General Marmont laid the gun in his turn, also came near the mark, but also did not touch the brig, which, seeing the battery full of generals, fired with double rapidity. 'Come, take your place again,' said Napoleon to the corporal. He in his turn aimed, and dropped the shell right in the middle of the brig. Pierced through and through by the great projectile, the vessel filled in an instant, and sank in a stately way in sight of the whole French army. Enchanted by the fortunate omen, the soldiers broke out into loud cheers, while the English fleet made all sail away. The Emperor congratulated the corporal of artillery, and decorated him on the spot with his own hands.[1]

I too had a share in the favours distributed that day. I had been sub-lieutenant five years and a half, and had made several campaigns. At Augereau's request the Emperor appointed me lieutenant. For a moment, however, I thought he was going to refuse me this promotion; for, remembering that a Marbot had figured as Bernadotte's aide-de-camp in the Rennes conspiracy, he frowned when the marshal mentioned me to him, and said, looking steadily at me: 'Is it you who ——?' 'No, sir; it is not I who ——' answered I, briskly. 'Oh! you're the good one, the Genoa and Marengo one—I make you lieutenant.' The Emperor also granted me a place in the military school at Fontainebleau for my young brother Felix, and from this day forward he never again mixed me up with my elder brother, who was always an object of his dislike, though he had done nothing to deserve it.

[1] [This pleasing anecdote, though not as strictly true as one could wish, has some foundation. On the actual day of the distribution of the crosses no English vessel was sunk by the batteries, and no brig anywhere about that time. The 'Immortalité' frigate was struck by a shot on that day, but not materially injured. On the following day, however, a 13-inch shell fell on board the armed cutter 'Constitution,' with very much the result here described, except that she did not sink until all her crew had been brought off by the boats of the squadron (James). Whether Napoleon was in the battery whence this shell was fired, the naval historian does not say.]

The troops of the 7th corps not being yet assembled in camp, there was little for Augereau to do at Brest. He obtained leave, therefore, to pass the rest of the summer and the autumn at his pretty estate of La Houssaye, near Tournau, in Brie. I rather think that the Emperor was better pleased to know that he was there than at the further end of Brittany at the head of a large army; but Napoleon's suspicion as to any lack of devotion on the part of Augereau had no foundation whatever, and arose from the underhand dealings of a certain General S——. This person was a major-general, serving with the 7th corps. He had plenty of talent, and unbounded ambition, but such a bad reputation for honesty that no general officer would rub shoulders with him. Piqued at seeing himself thus cut by his comrades, and wishing to be revenged, he caused a letter to reach the Emperor in which he denounced all the generals of the 7th corps, the marshal among them, as conspirators against the Empire. I must do Napoleon the justice of saying that he did not employ any secret means of ascertaining the truth, contenting himself with passing S——'s letter on to Augereau. The marshal believed himself able to assert that nothing serious was taking place in his army; still, as he knew that several generals and colonels talked sometimes without consideration, he resolved to put a stop to this state of things. Fearing, however, to compromise the very officers to whom he only wished to give a wigging, he thought it better to send what he had to say by an aide-de-camp, and was good enough to entrust this important errand to me. I left La Houssaye in hot August weather, rode post-haste the 160 leagues which lie between that château and the town of Brest, and back again after only twenty-four hours' stay. I arrived completely tired out, for I think there is no more laborious business than posting on horseback. I had found the state of things a good deal more serious than the marshal thought; there really was a considerable ferment in the army. Before I returned to La Houssaye, however, the message which I bore had tranquillised the minds of the generals, who were nearly all devoted to the marshal.

I was just beginning to recover from the dreadful fatigue I had undergone, when one morning the marshal told me that the generals wanted to kick out S—— for a spy. He added that he absolutely must send an aide-de-camp, and that he had come to ask me if I felt in a condition to repeat my post-haste ride; he would not order me, but would refer the question to me to decide if I could do it. I admit that if there had been

any reward, even a promotion to be gained, I should have declined; but it was a question of being of service to my father's friend, the marshal, who had so kindly taken me up; so, without hesitation, I said that I would start in an hour. My only anxiety was whether I should be able to post 320 leagues again on horseback, so tiring is this mode of travelling. However, I got into the way of stopping two hours in every twenty-four, lying down in the straw in the stable of every post-house. It was frightfully hot; still, I got to Brest, and returned without accident, having thus ridden post 640 leagues within one month. I had at least the satisfaction of being able to tell the marshal that the generals would confine themselves to letting S—— know what they thought of him. Having thus fallen into discredit, General S—— deserted to England, married there, although he had a wife already, was condemned to the galleys for bigamy, escaped, and, after twenty years' wandering about Europe, died in penury.

After my second return from Brest the good Marshal Augereau showed a redoubled liking for me, and, in order to prove it by putting me in direct relations with the Emperor, he selected me in September to go to Fontainebleau to fetch Napoleon and escort him to the château of La Houssaye, where he came and passed twenty-four hours, accompanied by several marshals. It was while walking with them there that the Emperor, after imparting to them his views as to the way in which he wished to keep up his dignity and theirs, presented each of them with the sum necessary to buy a house in Paris. Marshal Augereau bought the Hôtel Rochechouart, situated in the Rue de Grenelle Saint-Germain, which is now used as the office of Public Instruction. It is a splendid house; but the marshal preferred to stay at La Houssaye, where he lived in fine style, for, besides his aides-de-camp, each of whom had his apartments, there was always a large number of guests. We enjoyed perfect liberty, and the marshal let us do anything, provided that there was no noise near the wing of the château occupied by his wife.

This excellent lady, always an invalid, lived very much by herself, and seldom appeared in the dining-room or drawing room; but when she did come, so far from being a constraint on our mirth, she delighted to encourage it. She had with her two very extraordinary lady companions. The first always wore men's clothes, and was known by the name of 'Free-and-Easy.' She was the daughter of one of the leaders who defended Lyons against the Convention in 1793.

She escaped with her father; they both disguised themselves as soldiers, and took refuge in the ranks of the 9th regiment of dragoons, passing by military nicknames and going on campaign. Miss 'Free-and-Easy,' who to a general masculine appearance united a most masculine courage, received several wounds, one at Castiglione, where her regiment formed part of Augereau's division. General Bonaparte was often witness to the prowess of this intrepid woman, and when he became First Consul he granted her a pension and gave her a post about his wife. But court life hardly suited her, so she left Madame Bonaparte, who, by mutual consent, made her over to Madame Augereau to be secretary and reader. The second lady about the maréchale was the widow of the sculptor Adam, and, though eighty years old, was the life and soul of the château. Broad fun and hoaxes were the order of the day at this period, especially at La Houssaye, the master of which was never so happy as when he saw his guests and the young people of his staff alive with merriment.

In November the marshal returned to Paris. The date of the Emperor's coronation was approaching, and the Pope was already at the Tuileries for the ceremony. A crowd of magistrates and deputations from the different departments had been summoned to the capital; there were also all the colonels of the army, with detachments from their regiments, to whom the Emperor distributed on the Champ de Mars those eagles which have since been so celebrated. Paris was splendid with a display of a luxury hitherto unknown. The coronation took place on the 2nd of December. I need not describe the ceremony, for this has been often done. Some days afterwards the marshals gave a ball to the Emperor and Empress. As you know there were eighteen of them. Marshal Duroc, although he was only Prefect of the Palaces, joined with them, which brought the number of the contributors up to nineteen, each of whom paid 25,000 francs towards the expenses. The ball took place in the great hall of the Opera; nothing so magnificent was ever seen. General Samson, of the engineers, was the manager; the marshals' aides-de-camp were the stewards, charged with doing the honours and distributing tickets. All Paris wanted to be there, and the aides-de-camp were assailed with letters and requests. I never had so many friends. Everything passed with the most perfect order, and the Emperor appeared satisfied.

In the midst of these festivities opened the year 1805, which was to be so prolific of great events. To give his army a share in the general rejoicing, Marshal Augereau repaired to Brest, where, in spite of the rigours of winter, he gave magnificent balls, and entertained in turn the officers, and even a good many of the soldiers. In the first days of spring he returned to La Houssaye, to await the moment of the invasion of England.

This expedition, though often spoken of as chimerical, was nevertheless on the point of coming off. An English squadron of about fifteen vessels, cruising continually in the Channel, rendered it impossible to transport the French army in boats and pinnaces, which would have sunk at the least touch from large vessels. But the Emperor was able to dispose of sixty sail of the line, French and allied, which were distributed through the ports of Brest, L'Orient, Rochefort, Ferrol, and Cadiz. His notion was to assemble them unexpectedly in the Channel, to crush by an overwhelming force the small squadron which the English had there, and thus to be able to command the passage, were it but for three days.

To this end the Emperor ordered Admiral Villeneuve, commander-in-chief of the naval forces, to send at once every available vessel out of the ports of France and Spain, with orders to sail not for Boulogne but for Martinique, where it was certain that the English fleet would follow them. While it was hastening off to the Antilles, Villeneuve was to leave those islands before it came up, to sail back round the north of Scotland, and return to the Channel by its upper end. With his sixty vessels he would easily beat the fifteen which the English kept in front of Boulogne, and put Napoleon in command of the passage. The English, on reaching Martinique, not finding Villeneuve's fleet there, would have felt about before starting in pursuit of him, and thus lost precious time. Only part of this fine plan was carried out. Villeneuve started not with sixty, but with something over thirty ships, and reached Martinique. The English, falling into the trap, hastened to the Antilles just as Villeneuve had started back; but the French admiral, instead of returning by Scotland, sailed for Cadiz in order to effect a junction with the Spanish fleet, as if thirty ships were not enough to defeat or drive off the fifteen ships of the English. Nor was that all; Villeneuve lost much time at Cadiz in repairing his ships, during which the enemy's fleet also got back to Europe, and cruised off Cadiz. Finally, the equinoctial gales rendered egress from

the port difficult, and Villeneuve found himself blockaded. Thus collapsed the Emperor's ingenious combination.[1] Realising that the English would not fall into the trap again, he renounced, or postponed indefinitely, his plan of invading Great Britain, and turned his eyes again towards the Continent.

But before relating the chief events in this long war, and the part which I took in it, I must mention a sad disaster which befell our family. My brother Felix, who was in the military school at Fontainebleau, was a little near-sighted, and for this reason had had doubts about entering the army. Once decided, however, he worked so strenuously that he soon became sergeant-major, a difficult post to fill in a school. The mischievous pupils had got a habit, when they had been constructing a redoubt, of burying under the earth of the embankment the tools which were given them for their work. General Bellavère, the head of the school, a severe man, ordered that the tools were to be given to, and accounted for by, the sergeant-majors, who thus became responsible for them. One day when they were at work, my brother, seeing a pupil bury a pickaxe, took notice of it. The other replied very rudely, adding that in a few days they would leave the school, that he would then be the equal of his former sergeant-major, and would call him to account for the reprimand. My brother was offended and declared that it was not necessary to wait so long. For want of swords, they used compasses fastened to the end of sticks. Jacqueminot, afterwards lieutenant-general, was Felix's second. In spite of my brother's short sight, which put him at a disadvantage, he wounded his adversary, and himself got a thrust through the right arm. His comrades dressed it secretly. Unhappily, non-commissioned officers are bound to carry their weapon in their right hand; and, as bad luck would have it, the Emperor came to Fontainebleau, and made them drill for some hours under a roasting sun. My poor brother, always on the run, with his right arm constantly stretched by the weight of a heavy musket, was overcome by the heat, and his wound reopened. He might have pleaded indisposition, and fallen out; but he was in presence of the Emperor, who at the end of the performance was to distribute the much-coveted sub-lieutenants' commissions. Felix made superhuman efforts to conquer the pain, but at length his strength gave way: he

[1] ['A scheme bearing the impression of a landsman's mind' is the phrase applied to it by an English historian, and this seems to have been the view taken by its intended victims.]

fell, and was carried away in a dying state. General Bellavère wrote curtly to my mother, 'If you want to see your son, come quickly, for he has only a few hours to live.' Her despair was so overwhelming that she could not go to Fontainebleau, but I posted thither at once. On arriving, I learnt that my brother was no more. Marshal Augereau was as kind as possible to us in our sorrow, and the Emperor sent Duroc, Marshal of the Palace, with a special message of condolence to my mother. Soon, however, a new grief was to beset her, for I had to leave her. A Continental war had broken out.

The cause of the war was as follows. At the moment when the Emperor most needed to be at peace with the Continental Powers, for the execution of his plan of invading England, he issued a decree uniting Genoa to France. This served the turn of the English admirably. They profited by his action to alarm all the Continental nations, representing that Napoleon aspired to a general attack on the whole of Europe. Russia and Austria declared war against us; Prussia, with more circumspection, prepared for war, but as yet did not declare. The Emperor, doubtless, had foreseen this hostile movement, and the desire to bring matters to a crisis was perhaps his reason for taking possession of Genoa. The hope that Villeneuve might make himself master for a few days of the Channel, by uniting the whole French and Spanish fleets, was at an end. A Continental war was the best means of escaping from the ridicule and appearance of impotence as regarded England, which the failure of the invasion scheme, after three years' open preparation, had brought upon his arms. The new coalition came just at the right moment to get him out of an annoying position.

Three years in camps had had an excellent result on our troops. Never had France possessed an army so well trained, of such good material, so eager for fighting and fame. Never had a general had under his hand forces so powerful both materially and intellectually, with such capacity for using them. Napoleon, therefore, accepted the war with joy, so certain was he of victory, so confident that he would use his enemies' mistakes to strengthen his throne. He knew how the chivalrous spirit of Frenchmen has in all ages been influenced by the enthusiasm of military glory.

CHAPTER XIX.

The 'Grand Army,' which the Emperor was about to set in motion against Austria, had at that time its rear towards that Power, and towards Europe; the two French corps extended along the coasts of the North Sea, the Channel, and the ocean, facing towards England. Thus the right wing of the first corps, under Bernadotte, was occupying Hanover; the second, under Marmont, was in Holland; the third, under Davout, at Bruges; the fourth, fifth, and sixth, commanded by Soult, Lannes, and Ney respectively, were encamped about Boulogne; while the seventh, Augereau's division, was on the extreme left, at Brest.

To break up this long *cordon*, and mass the troops for the march into Austria, involved a reversal of the front on a vast scale. Every army corps, therefore, had to face about, so as to bring its front towards Germany, and march thither by the nearest road. The right wing became the left, and *vice versâ*. It will be seen that to reach the Danube from Hanover or from Holland, the first and second divisions had a much shorter march to make than those which were at Boulogne; while these again were much nearer than Augereau's corps, which, in order to reach the Swiss frontiers from Brest, had to traverse the whole breadth of France, a distance of three hundred leagues. Travelling in several columns, the army took two months to cover the distance. Augereau, starting the last from Brest, passed them, and halting first at Rennes, then at Alençon, Melun, Troyes, and Langres, he inspected the various regiments, and roused their ardour by his presence. It was magnificent weather. I passed the two months in a post-chaise, going incessantly from one column to another with orders from the marshal. Twice I was able to stop at Paris and see my mother. Our studs had preceded us; I had three excellent horses, and a servant of moderate quality.

While the Grand Army marched on the Rhine and the Danube, the French troops who were quartered in Upper Italy

under the command of Masséna assembled in the province of Milan in order to attack the Austrians on Venetian territory. To transmit orders to Masséna the Emperor was obliged to send his aides-de-camp through Switzerland, which was neutral ground. Now it happened that while Augereau was at Langres an orderly officer bearing despatches from Napoleon was overturned in his carriage and broke his collar-bone. He had himself carried to the marshal's quarters, and declared to him that he could not possibly accomplish his mission. The marshal, knowing how important it was that the Emperor's despatches should reach Italy without loss of time, ordered me to carry them forward by way of Hüningen, whither I had also to take his orders with regard to throwing a bridge across the Rhine. This duty pleased me much, for it would give me a fine journey, with the certainty of rejoining the 7th corps before it could come in contact with the Austrians. I quickly reached Hüningen and Basle, thence came to Berne and Rapperschwyl, where I left my carriage; then on horseback I crossed the Splügen, which was then almost impracticable, and not without danger. I entered Italy by Chiavenna, and joined Masséna near Verona. But it was only there and back, for Masséna was in as great a hurry to see me start back with his reply to the Emperor as I was myself to rejoin Augereau so as not to miss any affairs in which his division might be engaged. I did not, however, return as quickly as I had come, for a heavy snowfall had recently covered not the mountains only, but also the valleys. It was freezing hard, horses fell at every step, and I had to pay 600 frs. for two guides across the Splügen. The passage took us more than twelve hours, walking knee-deep in the snow. The guides even were on the point of refusing to go any further, asserting that there was imminent danger; but I was young and daring, and well aware of the importance of the despatches which the Emperor was awaiting. I declared, therefore, to my two guides that if they turned back I should go on without them. Every profession has its point of honour—that of guides consists chiefly in never abandoning the traveller entrusted to them; so mine went forward, and, after really extraordinary efforts, we reached the great inn at the foot of the Splügen just at nightfall. If we had been benighted in the mountain we must inevitably have perished, for the path was barely marked, and was bounded by precipices which the snow would have hindered us from seeing. I was thoroughly done up, but a night's rest restored my energy. I started at day-

break and reached Rapperschwyl, where I found a carriage and a road to drive on. The most difficult part of the journey was over; in spite of the snow and severe cold I got to Basle and then to Hüningen, where the 7th corps was assembled, on October 19. Next morning we began to pass the Rhine on a bridge of boats constructed for that purpose, for, although a short half-league lower down there was a stone bridge in the city of Basle, the Emperor had ordered Marshal Augereau to respect Swiss neutrality. Nine years later the Swiss themselves violated neutrality when they opened this bridge in 1814 to the enemies of France.

There then I was once again on campaign. It was 1805, a year which saw the opening of a long period of warfare for me, not to end till Waterloo, ten years later. Numerous as were the wars of the Empire, nearly all French military men enjoyed one or more years of rest, either because they were doing garrison duty in France, or because they were in Italy or Germany at a time when we had no war save in Spain; but, as you will see, this was not my case. Constantly sent from north to south, and from south to north, wherever there was fighting going on, I did not pass one of these ten years without coming under fire, or without shedding my blood on the soil of some part of Europe.

I do not intend to relate in detail the campaign of 1805; I will confine myself to recording some of the principal events. The Russians, who were marching to the support of Austria, were still far off when Field-Marshal Mack, having imprudently entered Bavaria at the head of 80,000 men, was beaten by Napoleon, outmanœuvred, compelled to take refuge in the fortress of Ulm, and with the greater part of his army, of which only two corps escaped, to lay down his arms. Of these divisions, one, under the command of the Archduke Ferdinand, succeeded in reaching Bohemia; the other, under the old Field-Marshal Jellachich, threw itself into the Vorarlberg towards the Lake of Constance, resting with one flank on Swiss neutral territory, and watching the passes of the Black Forest.[1] It was against this latter force that Augereau was to act.

After crossing the Rhine at Hüningen, the 7th corps was in Baden, the sovereign of which, like those of Bavaria and Würtemberg, had just concluded an alliance with Napoleon. We were thus received well by the population of Breisgau.

[1] [Here and on p. 136 the name Vorarlberg seems to be loosely used.]

Field-Marshal Jellachich had not ventured to try conclusions with the French in a country where the communications are so easy, but was awaiting us on the other side of Freiburg, at the entrance to the Black Forest, reckoning on making us pay a heavy price in bloodshed as the cost of the passage. His chief hope was to stop us in the Höllenthal, a long and narrow gorge, commanded on all sides by steep rocks easy to defend; but the troops, jealous of the brilliant success won by their comrades at Ulm, and eager to show their valour also, dashed hotly into the Black Forest and crossed it in three days, in spite of the difficulties of the ground, the resistance of the enemy, and the scarcity of provisions in that dreadful desert. Finally, the army emerged into a fertile country, and encamped about the pleasant town of Donaueschingen. Marshal Augereau and his aides-de-camp were quartered in the magnificent château belonging to the ancient princely house of Fürstenberg, in the grounds of which is the source of the Danube. The mighty river shows its power from its birth, for it is navigable for small boats at its issue from the ground. The artillery teams and our carriages had experienced great labour in the rocky defiles of the Black Forest, rendered still more difficult by the icy state of the ground. We had, therefore, to give the horses several days' rest, during which the Austrian cavalry came from time to time to feel our outposts, which were two leagues in advance of the town. Nothing came of it, however, but a little sharpshooting, which amused us, practised us in skirmishing, and gave us an opportunity of learning the various uniforms of the enemy. There I saw for the first time the Archduke Charles's Uhlans, the Rosenberg Dragoons, and the Blankenstein Hussars. When our teams were sufficiently rested, the army continued its march, and during several weeks we had continual engagements, which left us in possession of Engen and Stockach.

Although I was often much exposed in these different affairs, I only had one accident; but that might have been pretty serious. The ground, especially in the neighbourhood of Stockach, was covered with snow; the enemy was defending the position furiously. The marshal ordered me to go and reconnoitre in the direction in which he wished to send a column. The ground appeared to me very level, because the wind driving the snow had filled all the ditches, and I galloped off. But suddenly my horse and I went into a deep ravine, up to our necks in the snow; I was trying to extricate myself when two of the enemy's hussars appeared at the edge and fired their

carbines at me. Happily the snow in which my horse and I were floundering interfered with the aim of the Austrian troopers, and I was not hurt; but they were about to fire again, when a detachment of chasseurs sent by the marshal to my assistance drew near, and compelled them to make off promptly. With a little help I got out of the gully, but it took some trouble to pull out my horse, which, however, was also unwounded; and my comrades were able to laugh at the strange figure which I made on emerging from my bath of snow.

After having conquered the whole Vorarlberg, we took possession of Bregenz, and rolled back Jellachich's force upon the Lake of Constance and upon Tyrol. The enemy was covered by the fortress and the celebrated defile of Feldkirch, behind which he might have resisted us with advantage. We were expecting a murderous fight to carry this strong position, when, to our great astonishment, the Austrians expressed a desire to capitulate, which Marshal Augereau accepted with alacrity.

During the interview which the two marshals held on this occasion, the Austrian officers, who were humiliated by the recent reverses to their arms, gave themselves the malicious pleasure of imparting to us a very unwelcome piece of news, which had hitherto been concealed from us, but which the Russians and Austrians had learnt by way of England. The French and Spanish fleets had been beaten by Lord Nelson on October 20,[1] not far from Cadiz, off Cape Trafalgar. Our ill-starred Admiral Villeneuve, whom no positive order of Napoleon could determine to throw off his inactivity at a time when the sudden appearance of the fleets of France and Spain in the Channel might have secured the passage to England of the armies collected at Boulogne—Villeneuve, I say, on learning that he was about to be superseded by Admiral Rosily, passed in a moment from excessive circumspection to the extreme of audacity. He issued from Cadiz and delivered battle.[2] Had this action turned out in our favour it would have been almost useless, since the French army, instead of being at Boulogne to profit by his success and cross to England, was fighting in the centre of Germany, more than two hundred leagues from the coast. After a most obstinate combat, the fleets of Spain and France were beaten by that of England, whose admiral, the celebrated Nelson, was slain, bearing to his grave the

[1] [Really October 21.] [2] [At Napoleon's express orders.]

reputation of the first seaman of the age. On our side we lost Rear-Admiral Magon, a most meritorious officer; one of our vessels blew up, seventeen French and Spanish were taken. A terrible storm arose towards the end of the battle, and lasted all that night and the following day. It very nearly made an end of both conquerors and conquered; the English, having their own safety to consider, were obliged to abandon nearly all their prizes, the greater part of which were brought into Cadiz by the remainder of their brave and unfortunate crews; others went to pieces on the rocks and were lost.

It was in this battle that my excellent friend General D'Houdetot received a severe wound in the thigh, from which he has limped ever since. At that time little more than a child, he was a naval cadet attached to the staff of my father's friend, Rear-Admiral Magon. After the death of that brave officer,[1] his vessel, the 'Algésiras,' was captured after a sanguinary fight, and the English placed on board a prize crew of sixty men. But the 'Algésiras' having been separated by the storm from the enemy's fleet, the French officers and seamen who had survived the fight declared to the officers of the English crew that they would have in their turn to surrender, or prepare to recommence the struggle in the midst or the horrors of the night and the storm.[2] The English, not being disposed to fight, capitulated on condition of not being retained as prisoners, and the French, though threatened with shipwreck, joyfully replaced their flag on the stump of the mast. After having been twenty times on the point of foundering, owing to the damaged state of the ship, they succeeded at last in reaching Cadiz Bay. Villeneuve's vessel was captured, and that unlucky admiral was taken to England, where he remained three years as prisoner of war.

[1] ['The brave and highly-respected Rear-Admiral Magon.'—James.]

[2] [The 'Algésiras' struck to the 'Tonnant' about 2.15, and Lieutenant Charles Bennett, with a lieutenant of marines and about forty-eight men, took possession of her. There were about 600 Frenchmen on board, of whom forty or fifty were wounded. When the 'Algésiras' had separated from the fleet in the storm of the following day, and was drifting ashore, Lieutenant Bennett ordered the hatches to be taken off in order to afford the French crew an opportunity of saving their lives. After confining the English prize crew in the after-cabin, the French crew, with difficulty, brought the ship into Cadiz, and Lieutenant Bennett and his companions were allowed to return to the fleet.—James.]

Having been exchanged, he decided to go to Paris, but was arrested at Rennes, and blew his brains out.[1]

When Field-Marshal Jellachich decided to capitulate to the 7th corps of the French army, his decision was the more astonishing to us that, although we had beaten him, his retreat was still open into Tyrol, a country whose inhabitants have been for many ages very loyal to the house of Austria. No doubt the approaches to Tyrol were rendered difficult by the great quantity of snow; but the difficulty would have been still greater for us as the enemy, than it would have been for his troops to retire into a friendly province. Yet if the methodical old field-marshal could not make up his mind to carry on a war in winter among the mountains, it was not so with the officers under his command, many of whom blamed his pusillanimity, and talked of disregarding his authority. Among the most ardent in opposition to him was General the Prince of Rohan, a French officer in the service of Austria, a man of great courage and ability. Marshal Augereau, fearing lest Jellachich, persuaded by Rohan's advice, should succeed in throwing himself into Tyrol and escaping us, made haste to grant to the commander of the enemy all the conditions that he demanded. The capitulation therefore arranged that the Austrian troops should lay down their arms, and deliver up their flags, guns, and horses, but should not be taken into France, and should be allowed to retire to Bohemia, after swearing not to serve against France for a year. When announcing this capitulation in a bulletin, the Emperor at first evinced a little dissatisfaction that the Austrian troops had not been required to go as prisoners into France; but when he knew that, on account of the ease with which they could have escaped, Augereau had no means of compelling them to this, he reconsidered his opinion. As a matter of fact, during the night preceding the day on which they were to lay down their arms, a revolt against Jellachich broke out in several of the Austrian brigades. The Prince of Rohan, refusing to agree

[1] [Villeneuve actually returned to France on parole in the following April, and most accounts of his death attribute it, not to a pistol-shot, but to a wound or wounds with a dagger, whether inflicted by his own hand or not remains uncertain. Contemporaries were disposed to put his suicide into the same category with those of Pichegru and some others which were at all events very convenient to Napoleon. 'The First Consul is unlucky; his enemies always make away with themselves,' said the Paris of the period.]

to the capitulation, went off with his division of infantry, joined by several regiments from the other divisions, threw himself into the mountains, and crossed them, in spite of the severity of the weather. Then by a bold march passing through the middle of the cantonments of the troops of Marshal Ney, who were occupying the Tyrolese towns, he went near to fall upon the rear of the Army of Italy between Verona and Venice, as it was, under Masséna's command, closely pursuing the Archduke Charles, who was retiring on Friuli. The arrival of the Prince of Rohan in the Venetian territory when Masséna was already at some distance from it might have had very grave consequences; but, fortunately, a French army under the command of General Saint-Cyr coming up from Naples beat the prince and compelled him to surrender. At any rate, he only yielded to force, and was entitled to say that if Field-Marshal Jellachich had come with all his troops, the Austrians would very likely have managed to overcome Saint-Cyr and open a way for themselves.

When a force capitulates, it is customary for the conqueror to send to each division a staff officer to take possession of it, as it were, and bring it at the appointed time to the place where it is to lay down its arms. That one of my comrades who was sent to the Prince of Rohan was left by him in the abandoned camp, since the prince, being able to carry out his retreat in rear of the fortress of Feldkirch, and in a direction opposite to the French camp, had no fear of being stopped on his march. The cavalry, however, was in a different position, for it was bivouacked in a little plain in front of Feldkirch, facing our outposts at no great distance. I had been ordered by Augereau to take my place with the Austrian cavalry, in order to bring it to the appointed place of assembling. This brigade, consisting of three strong regiments, was not under any general, but was commanded by the colonel of the Blankenstein Hussars, a brave and very crafty old Hungarian. I regret that I was not able to catch his name, for I have a great regard for him, although he contrived to bamboozle me in a very unpleasant fashion.

When I arrived in his camp the colonel had offered me hospitality for the night in the hut where he was lodging, and we agreed to start at daybreak in order to reach the place appointed on the shore of the Lake of Constance between the towns of Bregenz and Lindau. As we had at most three leagues to cover, I was much surprised to hear the officers mounting about midnight. I rushed out and saw that the squadrons

were forming and that they were getting ready to start. The colonels of the uhlans and of the Rosenberg Dragoons, who were under the orders of the colonel of hussars, but had not been informed of his plans, came to ask the motive of this premature departure. I did the same. Thereupon the old colonel answered us, with calm hypocrisy, that Field-Marshal Jellachich, fearing that the French might taunt the Austrian soldiers as they passed their camp, which lay on the direct road to the shore by Lindau, and thus produce quarrels between the troops, had, with Marshal Augereau's consent, ordered the Austrian troops to make a long détour to the right, and thus, by turning the French camp and the town of Bregenz, avoid a meeting with our soldiers. He added that, as the way was much longer and the roads difficult, the leaders of the two armies had put forward the hour of departure by several hours. He was surprised that I had not been informed of it, but probably the letter which had been addressed to me on the subject had been by some misunderstanding stopped at the outposts. He even went so far as to order an officer to go and inquire for this despatch along the whole line. The motives alleged by the colonel of the Blankenstein appeared to his two comrades so natural that they made no remark upon it. Nor did I, although I had an instinctive feeling that the whole thing was a little shady; but what could I do, alone in the middle of the enemy's three thousand cavalry? It seemed better to show confidence than to appear to doubt the good faith of the Austrian brigade. As, moreover, I knew nothing about the flight of the Prince of Rohan's division, I admit it never occurred to me that the cavalry commander was trying to withdraw his force from the capitulation. I marched with him, therefore, at the head of the column. The Austrian commander, who knew the country intimately, had made his arrangements so well for keeping away from the French pickets, the position of which, moreover, was shown by their fires, that we did not pass near any of them; but what the old colonel did not expect, or could not avoid, was a meeting with the flying patrols of cavalry, which are usually sent out at night to a certain distance from the camp. All of a sudden we heard, 'Who goes there?' and found ourselves in the presence of a strong column of French, clearly visible in the moonlight. Then the old Hungarian colonel, not in the least put out, remarked to me: 'This is your business, Mr. Aide-de-camp; kindly come with me and explain the matter to the commander of this French regiment.' We went forward, I gave the pass-

word, and found I had to do with the 7th Mounted Chasseurs, who, recognising me as one of Marshal Augereau's aides-de-camp, knowing too that the Austrian troops were expected for the surrender of their arms, made no difficulty about allowing the brigade which I was guiding to pass. The French commander, whose troop had drawn swords, was even polite enough to give the order to sheath them as a sign of the good understanding which ought to prevail between the two columns, which continued their march, peaceably rubbing shoulders with each other. I did question the officer of chasseurs with regard to the change in the hour at which the arms were to be surrendered; but he had heard nothing of it. This, however, aroused no suspicion in my mind, as I knew that an order of this kind was not one of those which are communicated to the regiments beforehand from head-quarters. So I continued to march all the rest of the night with the enemy's column, finding that the détour which we had to make was certainly very long, and that the roads were very bad. Finally, as the day dawned, the old colonel perceiving a bit of level ground said to me in a bantering tone that although he was obliged before long to hand over the horses of his three regiments to the French, he wished at least to deliver them in a good condition and to take care of the poor animals up to the last moment, and with this view he was going to order a feed of corn to be given them.

The brigade halted, formed, dismounted, and as soon as the horses were picketed, the colonel, who alone had remained mounted, assembled the officers and troopers of the three regiments in a circle round him. There, in an inspired tone which rendered this old warrior really magnificent, he announced to them that the Prince of Rohan's division, preferring honour to safety with disgrace, had refused to agree to the shameful capitulation under which Field-Marshal Jellachich had promised to give up to the French the standards and arms of the Austrian troops, and had thrown itself into the Tyrol. He would have brought his cavalry division thither also had he not feared that forage for so large a number of horses would not be obtainable in the mountains. However, the plain was before them, by an artifice on which he congratulated himself they had got six leagues' start of the French troops, and all those who had a true Austrian heart might follow him across Germany into Moravia, where he intended to rejoin the troops of their august Emperor, Francis II.

The Blankenstein Hussars replied to their colonel's allo-

cution by a loud hurrah of approbation, but the Rosenberg Dragoons and the Archduke Charles's Uhlans kept a gloomy silence. As for myself, although I did not as yet know German enough to follow the colonel's harangue accurately, the words which I had caught, as well as the speaker's tone and the place in which he was, had made me guess what was on hand, and I admit that I felt very sheepish at having, although unwittingly, made myself the accomplice of this devil of a Hungarian. Meantime a frightful uproar arose in the immense circle which surrounded me, and I had a good opportunity of judging of the inconvenience which results from the heterogeneous mixture of the different races composing the monarchy, and consequently the army, of Austria. All the hussars are Hungarians; the Blankenstein, therefore, approved the proposal made by their colonel and fellow-countryman. But the dragoons were German, and the uhlans Polish, and for this reason the Hungarian had not the same influence over these two regiments, who in this dilemma listened only to their own officers. These declared that, considering themselves bound by the capitulation which the field-marshal had signed, they did not wish by their departure to put him and those of their comrades who were already in the hands of the French into a worse position; since, if any part of the Austrian troops violated the terms, the rest were liable to be taken as prisoners to France. To this the colonel of hussars replied that when the commander-in-chief of an army has lost his head, and failed in his duty so far as to deliver his troops to the enemy, it is the duty of his subordinates to consult only their own courage and patriotism. Then, waving his sword in one hand, and seizing the regimental colours with the other, he cried, 'Go, dragoons, go, and hand over to the French your disgraced colours, and the arms which our Emperor gave you to defend them. As for us brave hussars, we are going to rejoin our august sovereign. We shall be able to show him a flag without stain, and swords born by valiant soldiers.' Then, coming up to me, and casting a scornful look at the uhlans and dragoons, he added, 'I am quite sure that if this young Frenchman were in our place and compelled to choose between your course and mine, he would take the courageous side. The French love glory no less than their country, and in matters of honour know what they are about.' With these words the old Hungarian chief set spurs to his horse, and taking his regiment off at a gallop swept away and soon was out of sight.

There was a measure of truth in both the arguments which

I had just heard; but I was more convinced by that of the hussar colonel, because it seemed to me best to suit the interests of his country. I inwardly approved his conduct, therefore; but I could not very well advise the dragoons and the uhlans to follow his example, without exceeding my functions and neglecting my duty. So I maintained a strict neutrality in the discussion, and when the hussars had departed, I proposed to the other two colonels that they should follow me, and we took the road to Lindau. On the shore of the lake we found the Marshals Jellachich and Augereau, as well as the French army and the two Austrian regiments of infantry which had not followed the Prince of Rohan. On learning from me that the Blankenstein Hussars had declined to recognise the capitulation, and had gone off towards Moravia, both marshals were exceedingly angry. Augereau's wrath arose chiefly from the fear lest the hussars should raise the country in rear of the French army, for the road which they would take lay through the districts in which the Emperor, in marching on Vienna, had left huge masses of his wounded, parks of artillery, and so on. But the colonel thought it better not to notify his presence by attempting any surprise, being in a hurry to get away from the regions lying within the radius of the French army. Therefore, avoiding our outposts, following always byroads, hiding in the forests by day, and marching with all speed by night, he managed to reach the frontier of Moravia without hindrance, and rejoined the Austrian army, which occupied that country.

The troops which surrendered, after giving into our hands their arms, colours, and horses, departed in gloomy silence, as prisoners for one year on parole, in the direction of Bohemia. I remembered as I saw them go the noble harangue of the old Hungarian colonel, and thought I traced in the faces of many of the uhlans and dragoons signs of regret that they had not followed the old warrior, and grief at comparing the honourable position of the Blankenstein with their own humiliation.

Among the trophies given up to us by Jellachich's army were seventeen colours and two standards. According to custom Augereau sent these at once to the Emperor by the hands of two aides-de-camp, and entrusted the duty of taking them to Major Massy and me. We started in a good carriage, preceded by a post-wagon, in which were the colours under guard of a sergeant. We went to Vienna by Kempten, Munich, Linz, and Saint-Pölten, passing the superb abbey of Mölk on the Danube, one of the richest in the world,

a little before reaching the last-named place. Four years later I performed on this spot the most brilliant feat of my military career, under the eyes of the Emperor, and was commended for it by him, as you will hear when we reach the narrative of the campaign of 1809. But I will not anticipate.

CHAPTER XX.

In September 1805, as you have seen, the seven corps composing the Grand Army were on the march from the shores of the ocean to the banks of the Danube. When on October 1 the Emperor Napoleon crossed the Rhine in person at Strasburg, they were already in possession of Baden and Wurtemberg. At the same time a part of the strong force which Russia was sending to the aid of Austria reached Moravia, and the Cabinet of Vienna would in prudence have waited until this powerful reinforcement had joined the Austrian troops. But, carried away by an unwonted ardour, at the instigation of Field-Marshal Mack, it had despatched him at the head of 80,000 men against Bavaria. Of this country Austria had for centuries coveted the possession, while it had been the constant policy of France to defend it against invasions. Compelled to leave his state, the Elector of Bavaria retired with his family and his army to Würzburg, whence he invoked the aid of Napoleon, who granted an alliance to him, and at the same time to the sovereigns of Baden and Wurtemberg.

After the Austrian army under Mack had occupied Ulm, Napoleon, crossing the Danube at Donauwerth, made himself master of Augsburg and Munich. Thus the French army had got in rear of Mack, and cut the communications between the Austrians and Russians, whose leading columns were known to be already at Vienna and coming on by forced marches. The field-marshal then, recognising too late the mistake of allowing himself to be surrounded by the French troops in a circle of which the fortress of Ulm was the centre, tried to get out of it; but was beaten in the successive battles of Werthingen, Gunzburg, and, above all, of Elchingen, where Marshal Ney covered himself with glory, and was closed in more and more until he was compelled to shut himself up in Ulm with his army. The divisions of the Archduke Ferdinand and of Jellachich alone contrived to get away, the former towards Bohemia, the latter towards the Lake of Constance.

Ulm was invested by the Emperor, and, although it was not then much fortified, might, nevertheless, owing to its position and its numerous garrison, have held out for a long period and given the Russians time to come to its aid. But Field-Marshal Mack, passing from boastfulness the most overweening to the most utter discouragement, laid down his arms to Napoleon, who had thus in three weeks dispersed, captured, or destroyed 80,000 Austrians, and delivered Bavaria. The Elector was brought back, and we shall see him in 1813 requite the benefit by the most odious treason.

No longer impeded by Mack's army the Emperor hastened his march on Vienna, passing along the right bank of the Danube. He took possession of Passau, then of Linz, where he learnt that 50,000 Russians under General Kutusoff, reinforced by 40,000 Austrians, whom General Kienmayer had succeeded in bringing together, had crossed the Danube at Vienna, and were in position at Mölk and St.-Pölten. At the same time he was informed that the army under the celebrated Archduke Charles had been beaten by Masséna in Venetia, and was retiring by Friuli in the direction of Vienna, and that the Archduke John was occupying Tyrol with several divisions. Thus the two archdukes were threatening the right of the French army, while the Russians were in front of it. To guard against a flank attack, the Emperor, having Augereau's division already in the direction of Bregenz, ordered Ney to invade Tyrol, and sent Marmont's division to Leoben to stop the Archduke Charles on his way from Italy.

Napoleon having thus secured his right flank wished, before advancing to a front attack on the Russians, whose leading division had just come into contact with his, at Amstetten, near Steyer, to guard his left flank against any attack from the Austrian troops who had taken refuge in Bohemia, under the Archduke Ferdinand. To this end the Emperor bade Marshal Mortier, with Dupont's and Gazan's divisions of infantry, cross the Danube by the bridges at Passau and Linz, and then descend the river by the left bank, while the main body continued its march on the right bank. Meanwhile, in order not to leave Mortier too much isolated, Napoleon formed the scheme of collecting on the Danube a great number of boats captured on the tributary streams, and forming a flotilla which, under the direction of the marine division of the guard, was to descend the river, keeping always abreast of Mortier's corps, thus uniting the forces on the two banks. You may think it very bold of me to venture on a criticism of one of the great captain's

operations, but I cannot refrain from saying that there was no sufficient ground for sending Mortier's division to the left bank, and that it was a mistake which might have had the most awkward results. As a matter of fact the Danube, the greatest river of Europe, is below Passau so broad in winter that one cannot with the naked eye make out a man on the opposite bank. Moreover, it is very deep and swift, and therefore guaranteed perfect security to the left wing of the French army. It would have been enough to break the bridges as we reached them in our march towards Vienna, in order completely to protect the left wing of the army as it marched down the right bank, all the more so that an attack could only come from the Archduke Ferdinand, on the side of Bohemia. But the archduke was only too glad to have escaped from the French before Ulm, and with his small number of troops, and those almost entirely cavalry, was not likely to have either the desire or the means of crossing an obstacle like the Danube, in order to attack them at the risk of being hurled back into the river. At the same time, Napoleon, by detaching two of his divisions and isolating them on the further side of this immense river, exposed them to the risk of being captured or cut to pieces, a disaster which was easy to foresee and was very near being realised.

Field-Marshal Kutusoff, who had resolutely awaited the French in the strong position of St.-Pölten, supposing them to be closely pursued by the army of Mack, on becoming aware of the capitulation of that army did not feel himself strong enough to resist Napoleon single-handed. Not caring to risk his troops for the defence of the town of Vienna, he decided to put the Danube between himself and the conqueror, and so crossed the river at Krems, burning the bridge behind him. Hardly had he arrived on the left bank with his whole army than he fell in with the scouts of Gazan's division, which was marching from Dürrenstein on Krems, Marshal Mortier at its head. On learning that an isolated French corps existed on the left bank, Kutusoff resolved to crush it. With this view he attacked it in front, on the narrow high road which runs along the Danube, while his light troops, crowning the scarped heights which command the Danube, were to occupy Dürrenstein, and thus cut off Gazan's retreat. The position of the division at that moment was the more critical that the greater part of the flotilla was staying behind, and there were only two small vessels, which offered no facility for bringing reinforcements from the right

bank. Thus attacked in front, in rear, and on one flank, by an enemy six times more numerous, shut in moreover between steep rocks occupied by the Russians, and the deep Danube, the French soldiers, crowded as they were on a narrow causeway, were not for one moment demoralised. Marshal Mortier set them a noble example, for the suggestion having been made that he should take advantage of a boat to cross over to the right bank, where he would be safe in the midst of the Grand Army, and thus avoid giving the Russians the glory of capturing a marshal, he replied that he would die with his soldiers or with them pass over the bodies of the Russians. A sanguinary combat with the bayonet ensued, 5,000 French opposed to 30,000 Russians; the horrors of night were added to those of the struggle. Gazan's division in close column managed to regain Dürrenstein at the moment when Dupont's division, which had remained behind opposite Mölk, alarmed by the sound of the cannon, was hastening to its support. The field of battle remained in the possession of the French. In this hand-to-hand fight, where the bayonet was almost exclusively used, our soldiers, being the handier and more active, had an immense advantage over the gigantic Russians. The enemy's loss, therefore, amounted to 4,500, while ours was 3,000 only. Had our divisions not consisted of veteran troops, Mortier's corps would probably have been destroyed. So well did the Emperor understand this, that he made haste to recall it to the right bank; and what proves to me that he recognised the mistake he had made in throwing this isolated body across the river is that, while he freely rewarded the brave regiments which had fought at Dürrenstein, the bulletins made scarcely any mention of this sanguinary affair. It seemed as if, no explanation satisfactory to military men being possible of this operation beyond the Danube, there was a desire to hush up its consequences. What confirms me still more in the opinion which I make bold to offer is, that in the campaign of 1809 the Emperor, when he found himself on the same ground, did not send any force across the river, but on the contrary kept all his army together during all the march to Vienna.

But to return to my own experiences. When Major Massy and I reached Vienna, on the mission entrusted to us by Augereau, Napoleon and the bulk of his army had already left that city, of which they had taken possession without striking a blow. Even the passage of the Danube, which it was necessary to cross in order to pursue the Austrians and

Russians, who had retired into Moravia, had not been disputed, thanks to a perhaps not wholly creditable trick employed by Marshals Lannes and Murat. This episode, which had so great an influence on the result of this famous campaign, deserves to be related. The city of Vienna stands on the right bank of the Danube. A small branch of the great river flows through the town, from which the main stream is more than half a league distant. At this point the Danube forms a number of islands, connected by a long series of wooden bridges, the last of which crosses the largest arm and rests on the left bank at a place called Spitz. Over this long series of bridges runs the road to Moravia. When the Austrians defend the passage across a river, they have the very bad habit of keeping up the bridges till the last moment, in order to retain the power of making counter attacks. The enemy seldom allows them time to do this, and carries by assault the bridges which they have omitted to burn. The French treated them thus in the campaign of 1796, in the memorable actions of Lodi and Arcola. Even these warnings could not cure the Austrians of the habit. After abandoning Vienna, which was not capable of defence, they retired across the Danube without destroying one of the bridges traversing that mighty stream, and confined themselves to distributing inflammable materials on the flooring of the great bridge, in order to set it on fire when the French appeared. Besides this, they had established on the left bank, at the further end of the bridge of Spitz, a strong battery of artillery and a division of 6,000 men, under the command of Prince Auersperg, a brave soldier, but not a man of much ability. I should mention that a few days before the entry of the French into Vienna, the Emperor had received the Austrian general, Count Gyulai, who came with a flag of truce to make proposals for peace. These had no results; but as soon as the advanced guard had taken possession of Vienna, and Napoleon was established in the royal palace of Schönbrunn, General Gyulai returned and passed more than an hour alone with the Emperor. Thereupon the rumour that an armistice was about to be concluded spread not only among the French regiments as they entered Vienna, but among the Austrian troops who were leaving the town to go across the Danube.

Murat and Lannes, whom the Emperor had ordered to try and make themselves masters of the passage of the river, marched towards the bridge, posted Oudinot's grenadiers in

rear of the thick plantations, and then went forward accompanied only by some officers who could speak German. The weak pickets fell back firing on them; the two marshals cried out to the Austrians that there was an armistice, and, continuing to advance, they crossed all the little bridges without hindrance, and having reached the large one, they made the same statement to the officer in command at Spitz. He did not venture to fire upon two marshals, who came almost alone, asserting that hostilities were suspended; but before letting them pass he wished to go himself to General Auersperg and get his orders. While he was gone, leaving the post in charge of a sergeant, Lannes and Murat persuaded the latter that as a condition of the armistice was that the bridge should be given up to them, he with his soldiers must go and rejoin his officer on the left bank. The poor sergeant hesitated; they pushed him gently back, talking to him all the time, and by a slow but uninterrupted movement reached the further end of the great bridge. There an Austrian officer was about to set a light to the inflammable matter; his match was snatched from his hands, and he was told that if he committed such a crime it would be the worse for him. Meantime the column of Oudinot's grenadiers appeared, and got well on to the bridge; the Austrian gunners were about to fire; the French marshals ran towards the commander of artillery and repeated their assurance that an armistice had been concluded; then, sitting down on the guns, they begged the artillerymen to inform General Auersperg of their presence. In course of time he came up, and was on the point of giving the order to fire, although the French grenadiers were by this time surrounding the Austrian batteries and battalions. But the two marshals assured him there was a treaty, and that its first condition was that the French should occupy the bridges. The unhappy general, fearing to get himself into trouble if he shed blood needlessly, lost his head so far as to withdraw, taking with him all the troops which had been given to him to defend the bridges. Without this blunder on the part of General Auersperg, the passage of the Danube would certainly not have been executed without great difficulty; it might even have turned out impracticable; in which case, Napoleon would have been unable to follow the Russian and Austrian armies into Moravia, and his campaign would have failed. He certainly thought so then, and his opinion was confirmed four years later, when, in 1809, the Austrians did burn the bridges over the Danube, and to win the passage of the river we were compelled to fight the two battles of

Essling and Wagram at a cost of more than 30,000 men; while in 1805 Marshals Lannes and Murat carried the bridges without having a man wounded. But was the stratagem which they employed permissible? I think not. I know that in time of war people stretch their consciences under the pretext that everything which assures victory may be done, in order to diminish the loss of life, and at the same time gain an advantage to one's country. Still, in spite of these weighty considerations, I do not think that one ought to approve the means employed to get possession of the bridge of Spitz. For my part, I should not like to do the same under similar circumstances.

To conclude this episode I may say that General Auersperg was severely punished for his credulity. A court-martial condemned him to be degraded, to be dragged on a hurdle through the streets of Vienna, and finally to be put to death by the hand of the executioner. The same judgment was pronounced against Field-Marshal Mack for his conduct at Ulm. Both, however, obtained a commutation of the capital sentence to that of imprisonment for life. They were released at the end of ten years, but deprived of their military rank, expelled from the nobility, and repudiated by their families. They both died soon after having regained their freedom.

The stratagem of Lannes and Murat having secured the passage of the Danube, the Emperor marched his army in pursuit of the Austrians and Russians. Herewith begins the second phase of the campaign.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Russian Marshal Kutusoff was marching from Krems by Hollabrunn to Brunn in Moravia, to join the second army, which the Emperor Alexander was leading in person; but on getting near Hollabrunn he learnt with consternation that the divisions of Murat and Lannes were already in possession of that town, and his retreat thereby entirely cut off. To get himself out of this fix, employing a trick in his turn, he sent General Prince Bagration with a flag of truce to Murat, to assure him that an aide-de-camp of his Emperor had just concluded an armistice at Vienna with the Emperor Napoleon, and that peace would without doubt shortly follow. Prince Bagration was a most agreeable man; he knew so well how to flatter Murat that the latter, taken in in his turn by the Russian general, eagerly accepted the armistice in spite of the remarks of Lannes, who wished to fight. But Murat was the superior officer, and Lannes had to obey.

The suspension of hostilities lasted thirty-six hours, and while Murat was inhaling the incense which the cunning Russian lavished on him, Kutusoff's army by a roundabout march, concealed behind a barrier of low hills, escaped the danger, passed Hollabrunn, and took up a strong position by which the road to Moravia was opened to it, and its retreat, as well as its junction with the other Russian army, posted between Znaym and Brunn, was assured. Napoleon was then at the palace of Schönbrunn. He fell into a great rage on learning that Murat had let himself be taken in by Prince Bagration, and had ventured to accept an armistice without orders, and directed him to attack Kutusoff forthwith. But the Russians had changed their position very much for the better, and gave the French a vigorous reception. The fight was of the most obstinate nature, but at length the town of Hollabrunn, captured and recaptured several times, set on fire by shells, filled with dead and dying, remained in possession of the French. The Russians retired on Brunn; our troops followed and occupied that town without fighting, though it

was fortified and commanded by the celebrated citadel of Spielberg.

The Russian armies and part of the remains of the Austrian troops being assembled in Moravia, the Emperor, in order to strike a final blow, proceeded to Brunn. My comrade Massy and I followed him in that direction, but we got along slowly and with much difficulty; first because the post-horses were on their last legs, and further, by reason of the great quantity of troops, guns, artillery and baggage wagons which cumbered the roads. We were obliged to wait twenty-four hours at Hollabrunn, until the way was cleared through its streets destroyed by fire, and still full of burning planks, beams, and fragments of furniture. This unlucky town had been so completely burnt that we could not find a single house to take shelter in. During our compulsory stay in the place we were appalled by a horrible spectacle. The wounded, especially the Russians, had during the fight taken refuge in the houses, where they were soon overtaken by the fire. At the approach of this new danger all who were able to move had fled; but many, wounded in the legs or otherwise severely injured, had been burnt alive under the ruins. Some had endeavoured to escape by crawling on the ground, but the fire had pursued them into the streets, and one might see thousands of the poor fellows half reduced to ashes; some of them were even yet breathing. The corpses of men and horses killed in the fight had also been roasted, so that from the unhappy town of Hollabrunn emanated a horrible and sickening odour of roasted flesh, perceptible at some leagues' distance.

There are districts and towns so situated as to be constantly the scene of battles, and Hollabrunn, which offers an excellent military position, is one of them. Thus it hardly repaired the mischief caused by the fire of 1805 when I saw it four years later, again burnt, and again piled with dead and dying men in a half-roasted state, as I shall have to tell when I relate the campaign of 1809.

Major Massy and I left this focus of disease as soon as we could, and reached Znaym, where four years afterwards I was to be wounded. Finally we came up with the Emperor at Brunn on November 22, ten days before the battle of Austerlitz.

The day after our arrival we discharged our commission, and handed over the flags with the ceremonial prescribed by the Emperor for occasions of the kind, for he never lost any opportunity of exalting in the eyes of the troops whatever would stimulate their passion for glory. The ceremony was as

follows. Half an hour before the parade, which took place at eleven o'clock each day in front of the Emperor's quarters, General Duroc, the grand marshal, sent to our lodging a company of grenadiers of the guard with their band and drums. The seventeen colours and two standards were placed in the hands of as many sergeants. Major Massy and I, preceded by an orderly officer, placed ourselves at the head of the procession, which set out with the band playing. The town was full of French troops, and as we passed the soldiers cheered loudly in honour of the victory gained by their comrades of the 7th corps. All the sentries saluted, and as we entered the court of the house where the Emperor lodged, the bands played a march, the troops assembled for parade, presented arms and enthusiastically shouted 'Vive l'Empereur!'

The orderly aide-de-camp came forward to receive us, and presented us to the Emperor, together with the sergeants who carried the Austrian flags. The Emperor inspected the various trophies, and after having dismissed the sergeants, he questioned us freely, both with regard to the battle which Augereau had fought, and upon our observations during the long journey which we had just made through the countries which had been the seat of war. Then he bade us wait his orders and follow the imperial head-quarters. Marshal Duroc gave us, as was customary, a receipt for the flags, then informed us that horses would be placed at our disposal, and invited us during our stay to take our seats at the table where he presided.

The Grand Army was at this time massed around and in front of Brunn; the advanced guard of the Allies occupied Austerlitz, the main body being posted around the town of Olmütz, where the Emperor Alexander and the Emperor of Austria were together. A battle seemed inevitable, but both sides so well understood how vast an influence this result must have on the destinies of Europe that each hesitated to make any decisive movement. Therefore, Napoleon, usually so prompt in his movements, remained eleven days at Brunn before attacking seriously. It is true that every day's delay increased his forces, as soldiers continued to arrive in great numbers who had fallen to the rear on account of illness or fatigue, but as soon as they recovered their strength hastened to rejoin the army, eager to take part in the great battle which they knew was coming. This reminds me that, in this connection, out of good nature, I told a lie which might have ruined my military career. It happened thus. The Emperor

used as a rule to treat his officers with kindness, but there was one point on which he was, perhaps, over severe. He held the colonels responsible for maintaining a full complement of men in the ranks of their regiments, and as that is precisely what is most difficult to achieve on a campaign, it was just on this point that the Emperor was most often deceived. The corps commanders were so afraid of displeasing him that they exposed themselves to the risk of being set to fight a number of enemies out of proportion to the strength of their troops, rather than admit that illness, fatigue, and the necessity of procuring food had compelled many of the soldiers to fall to the rear. Thus Napoleon, for all his power, never knew accurately the number of combatants which he had at his disposal on the day of battle.

Now it befell that, while we were staying at Brunn, the Emperor, on one of the rounds which he was incessantly making to visit the positions of the different divisions, noticed the mounted chasseurs of his guard marching to take up new lines. He was particularly fond of this regiment, the nucleus of which was formed by his *guides* of Italy and Egypt. His trained eye could judge very correctly the strength of a column, and finding this one very short of its number, he took a little note-book from his pocket, and, after consulting it, sent for General Morland, colonel of the mounted chasseurs of the guard, and said to him in a severe tone, 'The strength of your regiment is entered on my notes at 1,200 combatants, and, although you have not yet been engaged with the enemy, you have not more than 800 troopers there. What has become of the rest?' General Morland, at fighting an excellent and very brave officer, but not gifted with the faculty of ready reply, was taken aback, and answered in his Alsatian French that only a very small number of men were missing. The Emperor maintained that there were close upon 400 short, and to clear the matter up he determined to have them counted on the spot; but knowing that Morland was much liked by his staff, and being afraid of what their good nature might do, he thought it would be safer if he took an officer who belonged neither to his household nor to the guard, and, catching sight of me, he ordered me to count the chasseurs, and to come and report their numbers to him in person. Having said this, he galloped off. I began my operation, which was all the more easy that the troopers were marching at a walk, and in fours.

Poor General Morland, who knew how nearly correct Napoleon's calculation had been, was in great distress, for

he foresaw that my report would draw down upon him a severe reprimand. He hardly knew me, and did not propose that I should run into any risk in order to spare him unpleasantness. He remained, therefore, in silence by my side, until, fortunately for him, his staff adjutant came up. This officer, Fournier by name, had begun his military career as assistant-surgeon, afterwards becoming surgeon-major, when, feeling that his vocation was more for the sabre than for the lancet, he had requested and obtained permission to take his place among the combatant officers, and Morland, with whom he had served in former days, had got him a commission in the guard. I had known Captain Fournier very well when he was still surgeon-major; I had, indeed, been under great obligation to him, for not only had he attended my father at the moment he was wounded, but had followed him to Genoa, where, as long as his life lasted, he came several times a day to look after him. If the doctors whose duty it was to fight the typhus had been as attentive and as zealous as Fournier, my father would, perhaps, not have died. So I had often said to myself, and thus my greeting of Fournier, whom at first I did not recognise in the pelisse of a captain of chasseurs, was of the most friendly kind. General Morland, seeing the pleasure with which we met, conceived the hope of profiting by our mutual friendship to induce me not to tell the Emperor how many of his men had fallen out. He took his adjutant aside and conferred a moment with him. Then the captain came and entreated me in the name of our old friendship to save General Morland from a very awkward position, by concealing from the Emperor the extent to which the effective strength of his regiment had been reduced. I refused positively, and continued my counting. The Emperor's estimate had been very correct, for there were only just over 800 men present, so that 400 were missing.

I was going off to make my report when General Morland and Captain Fournier pressed me anew, calling my attention to the fact that the greater part of the absent men, having fallen out for various causes, would shortly rejoin, and that, as it was probable that the Emperor would not give battle before he had brought up the divisions of Friant and Gudin, who were still thirty-six leagues away at the gates of Vienna, several days would elapse, during which the chasseurs who had remained behind would rejoin the colours. They added that the Emperor was, besides, too busy to verify my report. I did not conceal from myself that I was being asked to

deceive the Emperor, which was a serious business; but I also felt that I had a great debt of gratitude to M. Fournier for the really affectionate care which he had bestowed on my dying father. So I allowed myself to be over-persuaded, and promised to dissemble a great part of the truth.

Hardly was I alone when I perceived the enormity of my fault, but it was too late. The important thing was to get out of it with as little harm as possible. To this end I took care not to reappear before the Emperor while he was on horseback, for my danger was lest he should go off to the chasseurs' bivouac, when their numerical weakness would strike him again and belie my report, which would have brought me into very great trouble. I was wily, therefore, and did not return to the imperial head-quarters till after nightfall, when Napoleon had dismounted and returned to his apartments. I was taken in, and found him lying at full length on an immense map spread on the floor. As soon as he saw me he called out, 'Well, Marbot, how many mounted chasseurs are there present in my guard? Are there 1,200 of them, as Morland declares?' 'No, sir, I only counted 1,120, that is to say, 80 short.' 'I was quite sure that there were a great many missing.' The tone in which the Emperor pronounced these last words proved that he expected a much larger deficit; and, indeed, if there had been only 80 men missing in a regiment of 1,200, which had just marched 500 leagues in winter, sleeping almost every night in the open air, it would have been very little. So, when the Emperor on his way to dinner crossed the room where the commanders of the guard were assembled, he merely said to Morland, 'You see now you've got 80 chasseurs missing; it is nearly a squadron. With 80 of these fellows one might stop a Russian regiment. You must keep a tight hand to stop the men from falling out.' Then, passing on to the commander of the foot grenadiers, whose effective strength had also been much weakened, Napoleon reprimanded him severely. Morland, deeming himself very fortunate in getting off with a few remarks, came up to me as soon as the Emperor was at table, and thanked me warmly, telling me that some thirty chasseurs had just rejoined, and that a messenger arriving from Vienna had fallen in with more than a hundred between Znaym and Brunn, and a good many more this side of Hollabrunn, so that he was certain that within forty-eight hours the regiment would have recovered most of its losses. I was quite as anxious for it as he, for I understood the difficulty in which I had been placed by my excess of gratitude towards Fournier.

Such was my dread of the just wrath of the Emperor, whose confidence I had so gravely abused, that I could not sleep all night.

My perplexity was still greater the next day, when Napoleon, during his customary visit to the troops, went towards the bivouac of the chasseurs, for a mere question addressed to an officer might have revealed everything. I was, therefore, giving myself up for lost, when I heard the bands in the Russian encampment on the heights of Pratzen, half a league from our outposts; therefore, riding towards the head of the numerous staff accompanying the Emperor, among whom I was, I got as near to him as I could, and said in a loud voice, 'There must surely be some movement going on in the enemy's camp, for there is their band playing marches.' The Emperor heard my remark, abruptly quitted the path leading to the guards' bivouac, and went towards Pratzen to observe what was going on in the enemy's advanced guard. He remained a long time watching, and at the approach of night he returned to Brunn without going to see his chasseurs. Thus I remained several days in mortal anxiety, although I heard of the successive return of sundry detachments. Finally, the battle being at hand, and the Emperor being very busy, the idea of making the verification which I had so much dreaded passed out of his thoughts, but I had had a good lesson. So when I became colonel, and the Emperor questioned me on the number of combatants present in the squadrons of my regiment, I always told the exact truth.

CHAPTER XXII.

MEANWHILE the great drama was approaching its final scene, and both sides were preparing to fight their stoutest. Most military authors are apt to confuse the reader's mind by overcrowding their story with details. So much is this the case that, in the greater part of the works published on the wars of the Empire, I have been utterly unable to understand the history of many battles at which I was present, and of which all the phases were well known to me. In order to preserve due clearness in relating a military action, I think one ought to be content with indicating the respective conditions of the two armies before the engagement, and reporting only such facts as affected the decision. That is what I shall try to do in order to give you an idea of the battle of Austerlitz, as it is called, though it took place short of the village of that name. On the eve of the battle, however, the Emperors of Austria and Russia had slept at the château of Austerlitz, and when Napoleon drove them from this, he wished to heighten his triumph by giving that name to the battle.

You will see on the map that the Goldbach brook, which rises on the other side of the Olmütz road, falls into the small lake of Mönitz. This stream, flowing at the bottom of a little valley with pretty steep sides, separated the two armies. The Austro-Russian right rested on a hanging wood in rear of the Posoritz post-house beyond the Olmütz road; their centre occupied Pratzen and the wide plateau of that name; their left was near the pools of Satschan and the swampy ground in their neighbourhood. The Emperor Napoleon rested his left on a hillock difficult of access, to which the Egyptian soldiers gave the name of the 'Santon,' because it had on the top a little chapel with a spire like a minaret. The French centre was near the marsh of Kobelnitz, the right was at Telnitz. But at this point the Emperor had placed very few people, in order to draw the Russians on to the marshy ground, where he had arranged to defeat them by concealing Davout's corps at Gross Raigern, on the Vienna road.

On the 1st of December, the day before the battle, Napoleon left Brunn early in the morning, spent the whole day

in inspecting the positions, and in the evening fixed his head-quarters in rear of the French centre, at a point whence the view took in the bivouacs of both sides, as well as the ground which was to be their field of battle next day. There was no other building in the place than a poor barn. The Emperor's tables and maps were placed there, and he established himself in person by an immense fire, surrounded by his numerous staff and his guard. Fortunately there was no snow, and though it was very cold, I lay on the ground and went soundly to sleep. But we were soon obliged to remount and go the rounds with the Emperor. There was no moon, and the darkness of the night was increased by a thick fog which made progress very difficult. The chasseurs of the escort had the idea of lighting torches made of pine branches and straw, which proved very useful. The troops, seeing a group of horsemen thus lighted come towards them, had no difficulty in recognising the imperial staff, and in an instant, as if by enchantment, we could see along the whole line all our bivouac fires lighted up by thousands of torches in the hands of the soldiers. The cheers with which, in their enthusiasm, they saluted Napoleon, were all the more animated for the fact that the morrow was the anniversary of his coronation, and the coincidence seemed of good omen. The enemies must have been a good deal surprised when, from the top of a neighbouring hill, they saw in the middle of the night 60,000 torches lighted, and heard a thousand times repeated the cry of 'Long live the Emperor!' accompanied by the sound of the many bands of the French regiments. In our camp all was joy, light, and movement, while on the side of the Austrians and Russians all was gloom and silence.

Next day, December 2, the sound of cannon was heard at daybreak. As we have seen, the Emperor had shown but few troops on his right; this was a trap for the enemy, with the view of allowing them to capture Telnitz easily, to cross the Goldbach there, then to go on to Gross Raigern and take possession of the road from Brunn to Vienna, and so to cut off our retreat. The Russians and Austrians fell into the snare perfectly, for, weakening the rest of their line, they clumsily crowded considerable forces into the bottom of Telnitz, and into the swampy valleys bordering on the pools of Satschan and Mönitz. But as they imagined, for some not very apparent reason, that Napoleon had the intention of retreating without delivering battle, they resolved, by way of completing their success, to attack us on our left towards the 'Santon,' and also on our centre before Puntowitz. By this means our

defeat would be complete when we had been forced back on these two points, and found the road to Vienna occupied in our rear by the Russians. As it befell, however, on our left Marshal Lannes not only repulsed all the attacks of the enemy upon the 'Santon,' but drove him back on the other side of the Olmütz road as far as Blasiowitz. There the ground became more level, and allowed Murat's cavalry to execute some brilliant charges, the results of which were of great importance, for the Russians were driven out of hand as far as the village of Austerlitz.

While this splendid success was being won by our left wing, the centre, consisting of the troops under Soult and Bernadotte, which the Emperor had posted at the bottom of the Goldbach ravine, where it was concealed by a thick fog, dashed forwards towards the hill on which stands the village of Pratzen. This was the moment when that brilliant sun of Austerlitz, the recollection of which Napoleon so delighted to recall, burst forth in all its splendour. Marshal Soult carried not only the village of Pratzen, but also the vast tableland of that name, which was the culminating point of the whole country, and consequently the key of the battle-field. There, under the Emperor's eyes, the sharpest of the fighting took place, and the Russians were beaten back. But one battalion, the 4th of the line, of which Prince Joseph, Napoleon's brother, was colonel, allowing itself to be carried too far in pursuit of the enemy, was charged and broken up by the Noble Guard and the Grand Duke Constantine's cuirassiers, losing its eagle. Several lines of Russian cavalry quickly advanced to support this momentary success of the guards, but Napoleon hurled against them the Mamelukes, the mounted chasseurs, and the mounted grenadiers of his guard, under Marshal Bessières and General Rapp. The mêlée was of the most sanguinary kind; the Russian squadrons were crushed and driven back beyond the village of Austerlitz with immense loss. Our troopers captured many colours and prisoners, among the latter Prince Repnin, commander of the Noble Guard. This regiment, composed of the most brilliant of the young Russian nobility, lost heavily, because the swagger in which they had indulged against the French having come to the ears of our soldiers, these, and above all the mounted grenadiers, attacked them with fury, shouting as they passed their great sabres through their bodies: 'We will give the ladies of St. Petersburg something to cry for!'

The painter Gérard, in his picture of the battle of Austerlitz,

has taken for his subject the moment when General Rapp, coming wounded out of the fight, and covered with his enemies' blood and his own, is presenting to the Emperor the flags just captured and his prisoner, Prince Repnin. I was present at this imposing spectacle, which the artist has reproduced with wonderful accuracy. All the heads are portraits, even that of the brave chasseur who, making no complaint, though he had been shot through the body, had the courage to come up to the Emperor and fall stone dead as he presented the standard which he had just taken. Napoleon, wishing to honour his memory, ordered the painter to find a place for him in his composition. In the picture may be seen also a Mameluke, who is carrying in one hand an enemy's flag and holds in the other the bridle of his dying horse. This man, named Mustapha, was well known in the guard for his courage and ferocity. During the charge he had pursued the Grand Duke Constantine, who only got rid of him by a pistol-shot, which severely wounded the Mameluke's horse. Mustapha, grieved at having only a standard to offer to the Emperor, said in his broken French as he presented it: 'Ah, if me catch Prince Constantine, me cut him head off and bring it to Emperor!' Napoleon, disgusted, replied: 'Will you hold your tongue, you savage?' But to finish the account of the battle. While Marshals Lannes, Soult, and Murat, with the imperial guard, were beating the right and centre of the allied army, and driving them back beyond the village of Austerlitz, the enemy's left, falling into the trap laid by Napoleon when he made a show of keeping close to the pools, threw itself on the village of Telnitz, captured it, and, crossing the Goldbach, prepared to occupy the road to Vienna. But the enemy had taken a false prognostic of Napoleon's genius when they supposed him capable of committing such a blunder as to leave undefended a road by which, in the event of disaster, his retreat was secured; for our right was guarded by the divisions under Davout, concealed in the rear in the little town of Gross Reigen. From this point Davout fell upon the allies at the moment when he saw their masses entangled in the defiles between the lakes of Telnitz and Mönitz, and the stream.

The Emperor, whom we left on the plateau of Pratzen, having freed himself from the enemy's right and centre, which were in flight on the other side of Austerlitz, descended from the heights of Pratzen with a small force of all arms, including Soult's corps and his guard, and went with all speed towards Telnitz, and took the enemy's columns in rear at the moment when Davout was attacking in front. At once the heavy masses of

Austrians and Russians, packed on the narrow roadways which lead beside the Goldbach brook, finding themselves between two fires, fell into an indescribable confusion. All ranks were mixed up together, and each sought to save himself by flight. Some hurled themselves headlong into the marshes which border the pools, but our infantry followed them there. Others hoped to escape by the road that lies between the two pools; our cavalry charged them, and the butchery was frightful. Lastly, the greater part of the enemy, chiefly Russians, sought to pass over the ice. It was very thick, and five or six thousand men, keeping some kind of order, had reached the middle of the Satschan lake, when Napoleon, calling up the artillery of his guard, gave the order to fire on the ice. It broke at countless points, and a mighty cracking was heard. The water, oozing through the fissures, soon covered the floes, and we saw thousands of Russians, with their horses, guns, and wagons, slowly settle down into the depths. It was a horribly majestic spectacle which I shall never forget. In an instant the surface of the lake was covered with everything that could swim. Men and horses struggled in the water amongst the floes. Some—a very small number—succeeded in saving themselves by the help of poles and ropes, which our soldiers reached to them from the shore, but the greater part were drowned.

The number of combatants at the Emperor's disposal in this battle was 68,000 men; that of the allied army amounted to 82,000 men. Our loss in killed and wounded was about 8,000 men; our enemies admitted that theirs, in killed, wounded, and drowned, reached 14,000. We had made 18,000 prisoners, captured 150 guns, and a great quantity of standards and colours.

After giving the order to pursue the enemy in every direction, the Emperor betook himself to his new headquarters at the post-house of Posoritz on the Olmütz road. As may be imagined, he was radiant, but frequently expressed regret that the very eagle we had lost should have belonged to the 4th regiment of the line, of which his brother Joseph was colonel, and should have been captured by the regiment of the Grand Duke Constantine, brother of the Emperor of Russia. The coincidence was, in truth, rather quaint, and made the loss more noticeable. But Napoleon soon received great consolation. Prince John of Lichtenstein came from the Emperor of Austria to request an interview, and Napoleon, understanding that this would result in a peace and would deliver him from the fear of seeing the Prussians march on his rear before he was clear of his present enemy, granted it.

Of all the divisions of the French imperial guard, it was the mounted chasseurs who suffered the heaviest loss in their great charge against the Russian guard on the Pratzen plateau. My poor friend, Captain Fournier, had been killed, and General Morland too. The Emperor, always on the look-out for anything that might kindle the spirit of emulation among the troops, decided that General Morland's body should be placed in the memorial building which he proposed to erect on the Esplanade des Invalides at Paris. The surgeons, having neither the time nor the materials necessary to embalm the general's body on the battle-field, put it into a barrel of rum, which was transported to Paris. But subsequent events having delayed the construction of the monument destined for General Morland, the barrel in which he had been placed was still standing in one of the rooms of the School of Medicine when Napoleon lost the Empire in 1814. Not long afterwards the barrel broke through decay, and people were much surprised to find that the rum had made the general's moustaches grow to such an extraordinary extent that they fell below his waist. The corpse was in perfect preservation, but, in order to get possession of it, the family was obliged to bring an action against some scientific man who had made a curiosity of it. Cultivate the love of glory and go and get killed, to let some oaf of a naturalist set you up in his library between a rhinoceros horn and a stuffed crocodile!

I did not receive any wound at the battle of Austerlitz, though I was often in a very exposed position; notably at the time of the cavalry mêlée on the Pratzen plateau. The Emperor had sent me with orders to General Rapp, whom I succeeded with great difficulty in reaching in the middle of that terrible hurly-burly of slaughterers and slaughtered. My horse came in contact with that of one of the Noble Guard, and our sabres were on the point of crossing, when we were forced apart by the combatants, and I got off with a severe contusion. But the next day I incurred a much greater danger of a very different kind from those with which one ordinarily meets on the field of battle. It happened in this way. On the morning of the 3rd, the Emperor mounted and rode round the different positions where the fights of the day before had taken place. Having reached the shores of the Satschan lake, Napoleon dismounted, and was chatting with several marshals round a camp fire, when he saw floating a hundred yards from the embankment a large isolated ice floe, on which was stretched a poor Russian non-commissioned officer with a decoration.

The poor fellow could not help himself, having got a bullet through his thigh, and his blood had stained the ice floe which supported him. It was a horrible sight. Seeing a numerous staff surrounded by guards, the man judged that Napoleon must be there ; he raised himself as well as he could, and cried out that as soldiers of all countries became brothers when the fight was over, he begged his life of the powerful Emperor of the French. Napoleon's interpreter having translated this entreaty, he was touched by it, and ordered General Bertrand, his aide-de-camp, to do what he could to save the poor man. Straightway several men of the escort, and even two staff officers, seeing two great tree-stems on the bank, pushed them into the water, and then, getting astride of them, they thought that by moving their legs simultaneously they would drive these pieces of wood forward. But scarcely were they a fathom from the edge than they rolled over, throwing into the water the men who bestrode them. Their clothes were saturated in a moment, and as it was freezing very hard, the cloth of their sleeves and their trousers became stiff as they swam, and their limbs, shut up, as it were, in cases, could not move, so that several came near to being drowned, and they only got back to land with great difficulty, by the help of ropes which were thrown to them.

I bethought me then of saying that the swimmers ought to have stripped; in the first place, to preserve their freedom of movement, and secondly, to avoid having to pass the night in wet clothes. General Bertrand having heard this repeated it to the Emperor, who declared that I was right and that the others had shown more zeal than discretion. I do not wish to make myself out better than I am, so I will admit that just having taken part in a battle where I had seen thousands of dead and dying, the edge had been taken off my sensibility, and I did not feel philanthropic enough to run the risk of a bad cold by contesting with the ice floes the life of an enemy. I felt quite content with deploring his sad fate. But the Emperor's answer piqued me, and it seemed to me that I should be open to ridicule if I gave advice and did not dare to carry it into execution. So I leapt from my horse, and stripped myself naked and dashed into the water. I had gone fast in the course of the day and got hot, so that the chill struck me keenly, but I was young and vigorous and a good swimmer; the Emperor's presence encouraged me, and I struck out towards the Russian sergeant. At the same time my example, and probably the praise given me by the Emperor, determined a lieutenant of artillery, by name Roumestain, to imitate me.

While he was undressing I was advancing, but with a good deal more difficulty than I had foreseen. The older and stronger ice, which had been smashed to pieces the day before, had almost entirely disappeared, but a new skin had formed some lines in thickness, the sharp edges of which scratched the skin of my arms, breast, and neck in a very unpleasant fashion. The artillery officer, who had caught me up half-way, had not perceived it at all, having profited by the path which I had opened in the new ice. He called my attention to this fact, and generously demanded to be allowed to take his turn at leading, to which I agreed, for I was cruelly cut up. At last we reached the huge floe of old ice on which the poor Russian was lying, and thought that the most laborious part of our enterprise was achieved. There we were quite wrong, for as soon as we began to push the floe forward the layer of new ice which covered the surface of the water, being broken by contact with it, piled itself up in front, so as in a short time to form a mass which not only resisted our efforts, but began to break the edges of the big floe. The bulk of this got smaller every moment, and we began to fear that the poor man whom we were trying to save would be drowned before our eyes. The edges, moreover, of the floe were remarkably sharp, so that we had to choose spots on which to rest our hands and our chests as we pushed. We were at our last gasp. Finally, by way of a crowning stroke, as we got near the bank the ice split in several places, and the portion on which the Russian lay was reduced to a slab only a few feet in breadth, quite insufficient to bear his weight. He was on the point of sinking when my comrade and I, feeling bottom at length, slipped our shoulders under the ice slab, and bore it to the shore. They threw us ropes, which we fastened round the Russian, and he was at last hoisted on to the beach. We had to use the same means to get out of the water, for we were wearied, torn, bruised, and bleeding, and could hardly stand. My kind comrade Massy, who had watched me with the greatest anxiety throughout my swim, had been so thoughtful as to have his horse-cloth warmed before the camp fire, and as soon as I was out of the water he wrapped me in it. After a good rub down I put on my clothes and wanted to stretch out by the fire, but this Dr. Larrey forbad, and ordered me to walk about, to do which I required the help of two chasseurs. The Emperor came and congratulated the artillery lieutenant and me on our courage in undertaking and achieving the rescue

of the wounded Russian, and calling his Mameluke Roustan, who always carried refreshments with him on his horse, he poured us out a glass of excellent rum, and asked us, laughing, how we had liked our bath. As for the Russian sergeant, the Emperor directed Dr. Larrey to attend to him, and gave him several pieces of gold. He was fed and put into dry clothes, and after being wrapped in warm rugs, he was taken to a house in Telnitz which was used as an ambulance, and transferred the next day to the hospital at Brunn. The poor lad blessed the Emperor as well as M. Roumestain and me, and would kiss our hands. He was a Lithuanian, a native, that is, of a province of the old Poland now joined to Russia. As soon as he was well he declared that he would never serve any other than the Emperor Napoleon, so he returned to France with our wounded and was enrolled in the Polish legion. Ultimately he became a sergeant in the lancers of the guard, and whenever I came across him he testified his gratitude in broken, but expressive, language.

My icy bath, and the really superhuman efforts which I had had to make to save the poor man, might have cost me dear if I had been less young and vigorous. M. Roumestain, who did not possess the latter advantage to the same extent as I, was seized that same evening with violent congestion of the lungs, and had to be taken to the hospital, where he passed several months between life and death. He never, indeed, recovered completely, and had to leave the service invalided some years later. As for myself, though I was very weak, I got myself hoisted on to my horse when the Emperor left the lake to go to the château of Austerlitz, where his head-quarters now were. Napoleon always went at a gallop, and in my shaken state this pace did not suit me; still, I kept up, because the night was coming on and I was afraid of straying; besides which, if I had gone at a walk the cold would have got hold of me. When I reached the château it took several men to help me to dismount, a shivering fit seized me, my teeth were chattering, and I was quite ill. Colonel Dahlmann, lieutenant-colonel of the mounted chasseurs, who had just been promoted to general in place of Morland, grateful doubtless for the service I had rendered his late chief, took me into one of the outbuildings of the château, where he and his officers were established. After having given me some very hot tea, his surgeon rubbed me all over with warm oil; they swaddled me in many rugs and stuck me into a great heap of hay, leaving only my face outside. Gradually a pleasant warmth penetrated

my numbed limbs. I slept sound, and thanks to all this kind care, as well as to my twenty-three years, I found myself next morning fresh and in good condition, and was able to mount my horse and witness an extremely interesting spectacle.

The defeat which the Russians had undergone had thrown their army into such disorder that all who escaped the disaster of Austerlitz made haste to reach Galicia and get out of the victor's power. The rout was complete; we took many prisoners and found the roads covered with deserted cannon and baggage. The Emperor of Russia, who had made sure of victory, went away in hopeless grief, authorising his ally Francis II. to make terms with Napoleon. On the very evening of the battle, the Emperor of Austria, to save his country from utter ruin, begged an interview of the French Emperor, and Napoleon agreeing, had halted at the village of Nasiedlowitz. The interview took place on the 4th, near the mill of Poleny, between the French and Austrian lines. I was present at this memorable meeting. Napoleon, starting very early from the château with his staff, was the first at the place of meeting. He dismounted and was strolling about when, seeing the Emperor of Austria approaching, he went towards him and embraced him cordially. A strange sight for the philosopher to reflect on! An Emperor of Germany come to humble himself by suing for peace to the son of a small Corsican family, not long ago a sub-lieutenant of artillery, whom his talents, his good fortune, and the courage of the French soldier had raised to the summit of power, and made the arbiter of the destinies of Europe!

Napoleon took no unfair advantage of the Austrian Emperor's position, so far as we could judge from the distance at which respect kept us. He was kind and courteous in the extreme. An armistice was concluded, and it was arranged that plenipotentiaries should be sent by both parties to Brunn to negotiate a treaty of peace. The Emperors embraced again at parting, and returned to their respective quarters. During the next two days, Napoleon admitted Major Massy and myself to a farewell audience, charging us to report to Marshal Augereau what we had seen. At the same time the Emperor handed us despatches for the Bavarian Court, which had returned to Munich, and informed us that Augereau had left Bregenz and that we should find him at Ulm. We got back to Vienna and continued our journey, travelling night and day in spite of the snow, which had began to fall thickly.

CHAPTER XXIII.

We passed part of the winter at Darmstadt in gaieties of all kinds. The grand ducal troops were commanded by a general of much merit, Von Stoch. He had a son of my own age, a lieutenant in the guards—a delightful young man, with whom I became very intimate, and of whom I shall have more to say. We were only ten leagues from Frankfort, still a free town, and very wealthy; from of old the nest of all the intrigues against France, and the source of all the false news circulated in Germany to our injury. Accordingly, on the day after the battle of Austerlitz, when a report had got about that a battle had been fought of which the result was not yet known, the Frankforters were certain that the Russians had won; several newspapers went so far in their hatred as to say that our army had suffered to the extent that not a Frenchman had escaped. The Emperor, who got reports of everything, took no notice, until, foreseeing the possibility of a breach with Prussia, he began gradually to move his armies near to the frontier of that kingdom. Then, with the view of punishing the Frankforters for their impertinence, he ordered Marshal Augereau to leave Darmstadt at short notice, and quarter himself with his whole army corps on Frankfort and the neighbourhood. The Emperor's order required, further, that on the day of the entry of our troops the town was, in token of welcome, to give one louis-d'or to every private, two to the corporals, three to the sergeants, ten to the sub-lieutenants, and so forth. Moreover, the inhabitants were to lodge the troops and board them at the following rates—six hundred francs a day for the marshal, four hundred for lieutenant-generals, two hundred for major-generals, one hundred for colonels; and every month the state was to send a million francs to the Imperial Treasury at Paris.

The authorities of Frankfort, terrified at so exorbitant a demand, hastened to the French envoy; but he, primed beforehand by Napoleon, replied: 'You asserted that not a single Frenchman had escaped the sword of the Russians; the Emperor Napoleon wished therefore to put you in a position to count the number composing a single corps of the Grand Army; there are six more of the same strength, and the Guard

is coming presently.' This answer, when repeated to the inhabitants, filled them with consternation. Vast as their wealth was, they must be ruined if this state of things lasted for long. But Marshal Augereau appealed in their favour to the Emperor's clemency, and received permission to act as he pleased. In this way he took upon himself to retain only his staff and one battalion in the city; the other troops were distributed among the neighbouring states. From that time joy returned, and the inhabitants, to show their gratitude to the marshal, entertained him frequently. I lodged with a rich banker, named Chamot, who, during the eight months I stayed with him, was most kind to me, as were all his household.

While we were at Frankfort a sad mishap which befell an officer of the 7th division was the cause of my being sent on a twofold errand, the first part of which was unpleasant enough, while the second was agreeable and even splendid. As the result of a brain fever, Lieutenant N——, of the 7th chasseurs, fell into a complete state of childishness. Marshal Augereau assigned to me the duty of taking the poor young man, first, to Paris, to see Murat, who had always taken an interest in him; then, if Murat wished it, to the Quercy. As I had not seen my mother since I set out for the campaign of Austerlitz, and as I knew that she was not far from Saint-Céré, at the château of Bras, which my father had bought some time before his death, I accepted with pleasure a mission which, while enabling me to be of service to Marshal Murat, would allow me to pass some days with my mother. The marshal sent me a good carriage, and I took the road to Paris. But the heat and want of sleep excited my poor companion to such a degree that, passing from idiocy to raving madness, he went near to kill me with a blow from a coach-wrench. Never did I have a more unpleasant journey. At last I reached Paris, and brought Lieutenant N—— to Murat, who resided during the summer at the château of Neuilly. The marshal begged me to complete my task, and to bring N—— to the Quercy. I agreed in the hope of seeing my mother; but observed that I could not start for twenty-four hours, since Marshal Augereau had entrusted me with despatches for the Emperor, and I was going to Rambouillet to find him. I went thither in pursuance of my orders that very day.

I do not know what were the contents of the despatches which I bore, but they made the Emperor very thoughtful. He sent for M. de Talleyrand, and went off with him to Paris, ordering me to follow, and to present myself that evening to Marshal Duroc. I obeyed, and waited for a long time in one of the rooms of the Tuileries, till Duroc, coming out of the

Emperor's study and leaving the door ajar, gave directions in a loud voice for an orderly officer to get ready to start by the post on a distant mission. But Napoleon called out: 'Duroc, that is unnecessary, for we have got Marbot here going back to Augereau; he can go on to Berlin; Frankfort is half-way there.' Accordingly, Duroc instructed me to get ready to go to Berlin with the Emperor's despatches. I was annoyed, because I must give up going to see my mother; but I had to resign myself. I hastened to Neuilly, to let Murat know; and as for my own affairs, thinking that my new mission was very urgent, I returned to the Tuileries, but Duroc allowed me till the next morning. I turned up at dawn, and was put off till the evening; in the evening again till next morning, and so on for eight days. Still, I bore it with patience, because each time that I appeared Duroc only kept me a moment, which allowed me to go about in Paris. He had handed me a pretty large sum of money in order to set myself up in entirely new uniforms, so that I might make a good appearance before the King of Prussia, into whose hands I was myself to give the Emperor's letter. You see that Napoleon overlooked no detail when it was a question of raising the French army in the eyes of foreigners.

I got off at last, after receiving the despatches and instructions from the Emperor bidding me take special note of the Prussian troops, their bearing, their arms, horses, and so on. M. de Talleyrand gave me a packet for M. Laforest, our ambassador at Berlin, with whom I was to stay. On reaching Mainz, which was then in French territory, I learnt that Marshal Augereau was at Wiesbaden. I went there and surprised him much by telling him that I was going to Berlin by the Emperor's order. Travelling night and day in splendid July weather, I reached Berlin somewhat tired. In those days the roads in Prussia were not metalled, and one rolled along, nearly always at a walk, on shifting sand, into which the wheels sank deep and raised intolerable clouds of dust.

M. Laforest received me most kindly. I put up at the Embassy, and was presented to the King and Queen, and the princes and princesses. The King displayed much emotion on receiving the Emperor's letter. He was a tall and fine man, with a face expressing much kindness, but lacking in the animation which indicates a strong character. The Queen was in truth very handsome, but disfigured by the thick wrapping which she always wore round her neck—it was said, to conceal a decided goitre, which, through medical maltreatment, had

become an open sore. Her figure was full of grace, and her countenance, at once bright and dignified, expressed strength of will. I was most graciously received; and as it was a month before the answer which I had to take back to the Emperor was ready—so difficult, it seems, was it to settle—the Queen was kind enough to invite me to all the balls and parties which she gave during my stay.

Of all the members of the royal family, the one who treated me, to all appearances at least, with most kindness, was the King's nephew, Prince Lewis. I had been warned that he detested the French, and especially their Emperor; but as he was deeply interested in military matters, he never ceased questioning me about the siege of Genoa, the battles of Marengo and Austerlitz, and upon the organisation of our army. This prince was a splendid man, and, in respect to mental gifts and character, was the only member of the royal family who bore any resemblance to the great Frederick. I made acquaintance with various persons about the Court, and especially with some officers whom I accompanied every day to parades and manœuvres. Thus I passed my time at Berlin very pleasantly, and our ambassador paid me every attention; but in course of time I perceived that he wished to make me play in a delicate affair a part which would have been improper for me, and I had to adopt an attitude of reserve.

But let us consider a little Prussia's position with regard to Napoleon, with which, as I learnt later on, the despatches which I brought had much to do. By accepting from Napoleon the gift of the Electorate of Hanover, an hereditary possession of the family now reigning in England, the Cabinet of Berlin had alienated not only the anti-French party, but almost the whole Prussian nation. German self-esteem was offended by the successes gained by the French over the Austrians, and Prussia feared, besides, to see her commerce ruined in consequence of the war which the Cabinet of London had just declared upon her. The Queen and Prince Lewis sought to profit by this excitement in bringing the King to join Russia, which, though deserted by Austria, still had hopes of taking revenge for Austerlitz, and to go to war with France. The Emperor Alexander was still supported in his plans against France by his favourite aide-de-camp, the Polish Prince Czartoryski. Still the anti-French party, though increasing every day, had not yet succeeded in deciding the King of Prussia to break with Napoleon, but, finding itself supported by Russia, it redoubled its efforts.

It was clever enough to profit by Napoleon's mistakes in placing his brother Lewis on the throne of Holland, and nominating himself Protector of the Confederation of the Rhine—an act which was represented to the King of Prussia as a step towards re-establishing Charlemagne's Empire. Napoleon, they said, would end by making all the sovereigns of Germany come down to the rank of his vassals. Exaggerated as these assertions were, they yet produced a great revolution in the King's mind, and from that time his conduct towards France became so equivocal that Napoleon decided to write to him with his own hand, regardless of ordinary diplomatic efforts, to ask, Are you for or against me? Such was the drift of the letter which I had handed to the King. His council, wishing to gain time to arm, delayed the answer, which was what kept me so long at Berlin.

At length, in the month of August, a general explosion against France broke out, and the Queen, Prince Lewis, the nobility, the army, and the whole population cried out loudly for war. The King let himself be carried away, but since, although he had decided to break the peace, he still cherished a faint hope that hostilities might be avoided, it appears that in his answer he undertook to disarm if the Emperor would recall to France all the troops that he had in Germany. This Napoleon would not do until Prussia had disarmed, so that they were revolving in a vicious circle, from which war was the only escape.

Before my departure from Berlin I had evidence of the frenzy to which their hatred of Napoleon carried the Prussian nation, usually so calm. The officers whom I knew ventured no longer to speak to me or salute me; many Frenchmen were insulted by the populace; the men-at-arms of the Noble Guard pushed their swagger to the point of whetting their sword-blades on the stone steps of the French ambassador's house. In all haste I betook myself back to Paris, taking with me copious information on the state of affairs in Prussia. As I passed through Frankfort I found Marshal Augereau in much grief, having just heard of the death of his wife, a good and excellent person, whom he deeply regretted and whose loss was felt by the whole staff, for she had been most kind to us.

When I got to Paris I gave the Emperor a reply in the King of Prussia's own hand. He read it, and questioned me on what I had seen and heard at Berlin. When I told him how the guardsmen had whetted their sabres on the steps of the French Embassy, he brought his hand to his sword-hilt, and indignantly exclaimed, 'The insolent braggarts shall soon learn that our weapons need no sharpening!'

CHAPTER XXIV.

My mission being at an end, I returned to Marshal Augereau and passed the whole month of September at Frankfort. We prepared for war by getting all the amusement we could, for we thought that, nothing being more uncertain than soldiers' lives, they had better make haste to enjoy them.

Meanwhile, the different divisions of the Grand Army were concentrating on the banks of the Main. The Emperor had just reached Würzburg, and his guard was crossing the Rhine. The Prussians on their side were marching, and on their way through Saxony had compelled the Elector to join his forces with theirs, this compulsory and therefore insecure alliance being the only one which the King of Prussia possessed in Germany. It was true he was expecting the Russians, but their army was still in Poland, behind the Niemen, more than 150 leagues from the country where the destiny of Prussia was to be decided. It is difficult to conceive the blundering which, during seven years, controlled the decisions of the Cabinets of states hostile to France. We have seen how, in 1805, the Austrians attacked us on the Danube, and allowed themselves to be beaten in detail at Ulm, instead of waiting till the Russians could join them and Prussia declare against Napoleon. Now, in 1806, we had these same Prussians, who a year before might, by joining them, have hindered the defeat of the Austrians and Russians, not only declaring war against us when we were at peace with the Cabinet of Vienna, but imitating its fault by attacking us without awaiting the Russians. Then, three years later, in 1809, the Austrians renewed the war against Napoleon single-handed, just when he was at peace with Prussia and Russia. This want of unanimity secured victory for France. Unhappily it was not so in 1813, when we were crushed by the coalition of our enemies.

The King of Prussia's mistake in 1806, in declaring war against Napoleon before the Russians had come up, was aggravated by the fact that his troops, although well taught,

were so badly organised that they were not fit to match themselves with ours. In fact, at this period a company or troop in Prussia was the property of its captain. Men, horses, arms, accoutrements, everything belonged to him. He farmed it at the price of a fixed sum paid to the Government. Thus, all losses being at their expense, it was to the interests of the captains to spare their companies, whether on the march or on the battle-field; and as the number of men which they were bound to have was fixed, they enrolled in the first place all the Prussians who presented themselves, and then all the vagabonds in Europe whom their agent's sergeants could enlist in the neighbouring states. But as this did not suffice, the Prussian recruiting sergeants carried off a great number of men by main force, and these having become soldiers without their own consent were bound to serve till they were past the age for service. Then they were given a beggar's licence, for Prussia was too poor to give them a hospital or retiring pension. During their period of service these soldiers were mingled with genuine Prussians, the number of whom had to be at least half of the strength of each company in order to prevent revolts.

To maintain an army compounded of such heterogeneous elements an iron discipline was needed, wherefore corporal punishment was inflicted for the slightest fault. The numerous non-commissioned officers, all Prussians, carried a cane, which they frequently used. According to the recognised saying, they reckoned one cane to every seven men. Among the foreign soldiers desertion was mercilessly punished with death. You may imagine the terrible position of these foreigners, who, having enlisted in a moment of drunkenness, or been carried off by force, found themselves far from their own country, and in a bitter climate, condemned to be Prussian soldiers—that is to say, slaves during their whole lives. And what lives they were! With scarcely food enough to keep them alive, sleeping on straw, very lightly clothed, no cloaks, even in the coldest winter, and with pay insufficient to meet their wants. Indeed they did not wait to beg until they had received licence to do so with their discharge, for when out of sight of their officers they would put out their hands. Both at Potsdam and Berlin it has happened more than once that grenadiers at the King's very gate have begged alms of me. The officers, for the most part, were educated and did their duty well; but half of them were foreigners, poor gentlemen from almost every country in Europe, who, having taken

service only to get a living, felt no patriotism or devotion towards Prussia. Naturally most of them deserted her when she was in trouble. Again, promotion going only by seniority, the great majority of the Prussian officers were old and worn out, and in no state to undergo the hardships of war. It was with an army thus composed and thus officered that the conquerors of Egypt, Italy, and Germany were to be withstood. Madness it was indeed, but the Cabinet of Berlin, misled by the victories which the great Frederick had gained with mercenary troops, thought that it was going to be the same thing again, forgetting that the times had greatly changed.

On October 6 Marshal Augereau and the 7th corps left Frankfort to march towards the frontier of Saxony, of which the Prussians were already in occupation. It was a splendid autumn, a little frost at night and a brilliant sun by day. My little establishment was well organised. I had a good campaigning servant, François Woirland, an old soldier of the Black Legion, a regular swashbuckler and a grand marauder. But these make the best servants on campaign, for with them one never runs short of anything. I had three good horses, good accoutrements, a little money. I was very well in health, so I marched gaily to meet coming events.

Our road lay by Aschaffenburg, whence we went on to Würzburg. There we found the Emperor, who held a march-past of the troops of the 7th corps, amid great enthusiasm. Napoleon, who was in possession of notes about all the regiments, and knew how to use them cleverly so as to flatter the self-esteem of every one, said, when he saw the 44th of the line, 'Of all the corps of my army you are the one where there are most stripes, so your three battalions count in my eyes for six.' The soldiers replied with enthusiasm, 'We will prove it before the enemy.' To the 78th light infantry, composed mainly of men from Lower Languedoc and the Pyrenees, the Emperor said, 'There are the best marchers in the army; one never sees a man of them fallen out, especially when the enemy has to be met.' Then he added, laughing, 'But to do you justice in full, I must tell you that you are the greatest rowdies and looters in the army.' 'Quite true, quite true,' answered the soldiers, every one of whom had a duck, fowl, or goose in his knapsack. This was an abuse which had to be tolerated, for Napoleon's armies, once on campaign, only received rations at rare intervals, each living on the country as best he could—a

method which doubtless had great inconveniences, but also one immense advantage: it allowed us to push constantly forward, without being hampered by provision wagons and stores. This gave us a great superiority over our enemies, whose movements depended on the baking or the arrival of bread, on the pace of herds, and the like.

From Würzburg the 7th corps marched to Coburg, where the marshal was quartered in the prince's palace. All the family had fled at our approach, except the prince himself, a celebrated Austrian field-marshal. The old soldier had fought the French long enough to estimate their character, and had confidence enough in them to await them. His confidence was not misplaced, for the marshal sent him a guard of honour, made a point of returning his visit, and ordered that the greatest respect should be shown him.

We were now at no great distance from the Prussians, the King being at Erfurt. The Queen was with him, and rode about the army on horseback, seeking to kindle the army by her presence. Napoleon, conceiving that this was not a part befitting a princess, published in his bulletins some very insulting remarks about her. The French and Prussian outposts met at length on October 9, at Schleitz, and a slight engagement took place under the Emperor's eyes, where the enemy was beaten—an ill-omened commencement. On the same day, Prince Lewis, with a force of 10,000 men, was in position at Saalfeld, a town on the banks of the Saale in the middle of a plain, which is reached by crossing very steep hills. As the divisions of Lannes and Augereau had to advance on Saalfeld through these hills, if Prince Lewis wished to await the French, he should have taken up his position in that country, full as it was of narrow gorges where a few troops could stop much greater numbers. He neglected this advantage, however, probably owing to his persuasion that the Prussian troops were worth very much more than the French. He even carried his contempt of all precautions so far as to place part of his forces with a marshy brook in their rear, thus making their retreat in case of reverse very difficult. General Muller, an old Swiss officer in the Prussian service, whom the King had attached to his nephew in order to check his impetuosity, made, indeed, some remarks to this effect, which Prince Lewis took in bad part, adding that there was no need of so many precautions to beat the French—it was enough to fall upon them as soon as they appeared.

They appeared on the morning of the 10th, Lannes' division leading; Augereau's, which followed, did not come up in time to take part in the battle. Nor was its presence required, Lannes' force being more than sufficient. Augereau, while waiting for his division to issue into the open ground, took up his position with his staff on a hillock, from which we had a perfect view of the plain and could follow with the eye all the turning points of the battle.

Prince Lewis might yet have fallen back on the Prussian force which was occupying Jena, but having been the prime instigator of the war it seemed to him unseemly to retire without fighting. He was cruelly punished for his temerity. Marshal Lannes, cleverly taking advantage of the high ground under which Prince Lewis had so imprudently deployed his troops, first played upon them with artillery, and when they were shaken sent forward his masses of infantry, who, rapidly descending from the high ground, poured like a torrent on the Prussian battalions and broke them up in a moment. Prince Lewis, losing his head, and probably seeing the mistake he had made, tried to repair it by putting himself at the head of his cavalry, with which he impetuously charged the 9th and 10th Hussars. At first he gained a slight advantage, but our hussars, returning to the charge with fury, threw back the Prussian cavalry into the marshes, their infantry at the same time flying in confusion before ours. In the middle of the scuffle Prince Lewis found himself engaged hand-to-hand with a sergeant of the 10th Hussars, named Guindet. Being summoned to surrender, he answered with a sword-stroke which laid open the Frenchman's face, whereupon the other ran the prince through the body, killing him on the spot.

After the battle and the complete rout of the enemy the prince's body was recognised, and Marshal Lannes had it borne with due honour to the Castle of Saalfeld. There it was handed over to the princely family of that name, connected with the royal house of Prussia, with whom Prince Lewis had passed the previous day and evening in making merry over the coming of the French, and even, it was said, in giving a ball—and now he was brought back to them vanquished and slain! I saw his body the next day, laid out on a marble table; he was naked to the waist, still wearing his leather breeches and his boots, and seemed to sleep. He was indeed a handsome man. I could not refrain from sad reflections on the mutability of human affairs as I gazed on the

remains of this young man, born on the steps of the throne, but lately so beloved and so powerful. The news of his death caused consternation in the enemy's army, and, indeed, throughout Prussia.

The 7th corps passed October 11 at Saalfeld. In the next two days we reached Kala, where we fell in with some fragments of the Prussian troops who had been beaten before Saalfeld. Marshal Augereau attacked them, but they offered little resistance, and laid down their arms. Among the rest was captured Prince Henry's regiment, in which Augereau had once been a private. As it was difficult in Prussia for any except men of high rank to become field officers, and as sergeants were never promoted to sub-lieutenant, his company had still the same captain and the same sergeant-major. The Prussian captain, brought by a whim of fortune back into the presence of his former soldier, now become a marshal and distinguished for many brilliant services, recognised Augereau perfectly, but behaved like a man of sense, and talked to the marshal as if he had never seen him. The marshal invited him to dine, made him sit next to him, and, knowing that his baggage had been captured, lent him all the money that he required, and gave him introductions in France. How curious must that captain's reflections have been! But no words can paint the astonishment of the old sergeant-major at seeing his former subordinate covered with decorations, surrounded by a numerous staff, and in command of an army corps. It seemed to him like a dream. The marshal was much less reserved with this man than he had been with the captain; he addressed him by name, shook hands with him, and gave him twenty-five louis for himself, and two for every one of the soldiers of his time who were still in the company. This struck us as in very good taste.

The marshal reckoned on sleeping at Kala, which is only three leagues from Jena, but just as night was falling the 7th corps received orders to proceed at once to the latter town, which the Emperor had entered without opposition at the head of his guard and of Lannes' troops. The Prussians had abandoned the place in silence, but it had been set on fire, probably by some candles having been forgotten and left in stables, and part of the unhappy city was a prey to the spreading flames when Augereau's corps entered about mid night. It was sad to see the inhabitants, women and old men, half-clothed, carrying away their children and trying to escape destruction by flight, while our soldiers, whom their duty and the

neighbourhood of the enemy did not allow to leave the ranks, remained impassible with shouldered arms, like people who made light of the fire in comparison with the dangers to which they were shortly to be exposed.

As the fire had not reached the quarter of the town by which the French were arriving, the troops could move about freely, and while they were being massed in the open spaces in the larger streets the marshal and his staff took up their quarters in a handsome-looking house. I was just returning from carrying an order when I heard piercing cries coming from a neighbouring house, one door of which was open. I hurried up, and guided by the cries made my way into a handsome suite of rooms, where I perceived two charming young ladies of eighteen to twenty years old, in night-dresses, struggling with four or five Hessian soldiers belonging to the regiments which the Landgrave had sent to join the troops of the French 7th corps. The men were far gone in liquor, but though they did not understand a word of French, and I very little German, the sight of me and my threats produced an effect on them, and being used to the stick from their officers they took without a word the kicks and blows which, in my indignation, I administered to them freely as I drove them down the stairs. Perhaps I was imprudent, for in the middle of the night, in a town where utter disorder prevailed, being all alone with these men, I ran the risk of being killed by them ; but they ran away, and I placed a guard from the marshal's escort in one of the lower rooms. Then I returned to the young ladies' rooms; they had hurriedly put on some clothes, and I received from them warm expressions of gratitude. They were the daughters of one of the university professors, and he, having gone with his wife and servants into the quarter that was on fire, to help one of their sisters who had just been confined, had left them all alone, when the Hessian soldiers appeared. One of the girls said to me with much energy, 'You are marching to battle at the moment when you have just saved our honour. God will requite you ; be sure that no harm will happen to you.' The father and mother, who came back at the same moment, bringing the young mother and her child, were at first greatly surprised to find me there, but as soon as they learnt the reason of my presence they too heaped blessings upon me. I tore myself away from the thanks of this grateful family to report myself to Marshal Augereau, who was resting in the neighbouring house while waiting his orders from the Emperor.

CHAPTER XXV.

The town of Jena is commanded by a height called the Landgrafenberg, at the foot of which flows the Saale. This is very steep on the side towards Jena, and the only road there existing is that to Wiemar through the Mühlthal, a long and difficult passage, the exit from which, covered by a little wood, was guarded by the Saxon troops in alliance with the Prussians. A cannon-shot in rear of them, part of the Prussian army was drawn up in line. The Emperor, being able to reach the enemy only by this passage, was prepared for heavy losses in attacking it, for it did not seem possible to turn the position. But Napoleon's lucky star, which still guided him, furnished him with an unexpected means. So far as I am aware no historian has spoken of it, but I can vouch for the fact.[1]

As we have seen, the King of Prussia had compelled the Elector of Saxony to join forces with him. The Saxon people saw with regret that they were involved in a war which could bring them no advantage in the future, and which in the present was bringing ruin on their country. The Prussians were therefore detested in Saxony, and the Saxon town of Jena shared the feeling. A priest of the town, excited by the sight of the conflagration which was devouring it, and regarding the Prussians as the enemies of his sovereign and his country, thought he might give Napoleon the means of driving them from the land by pointing out to him a little path which infantry could use to climb the steep sides of the Landgrafenberg. He therefore guided a detachment of voltigeurs and some staff officers to the place, which the Prussians, thinking the passage impracticable, had omitted to guard. Napoleon, however, took a different view, and on the strength of the report which the officers made went up there himself, accompanied by Marshal Lannes and guided by the Saxon parson. Having observed that between the highest point of the path and the plain which the enemy occupied there existed a little rocky platform, the Emperor resolved to assemble there a portion of his troops, who might

[1] [Certainly neither Thiers nor Lanfrey seems to have any inkling of the way in which Napoleon learnt how to get his troops on to the Landgrafenberg.]

issue from it as from a citadel to attack the Prussians. The difficulty of the task was such that no one but Napoleon, commanding Frenchmen, could have surmounted it, but he sent at once for 4,000 pioneering tools from the wagons of the engineers and artillery, and ordered that every battalion should work in turn for an hour at widening and levelling the path, and that as each finished its task it should go and form up silently on the Landgrafenberg, while another took its place. They were lighted at their work by torches, the light of which was concealed from the enemy's eyes by the blaze of Jena. The nights being long at this period of the year, we had time to make the climb accessible not only to the columns of infantry but even to the wagons and the artillery, so that before daylight the corps of Lannes and Soult, and Augereau's first division, together with the foot guards, were massed on the Landgrafenberg. The term *massed* was never more correct, for the breasts of the men of each regiment were almost touching the backs of those in front of them. But the troops were so well disciplined that, in spite of the darkness and the packing of more than 40,000 men on that narrow platform, there was not the least disorder, and although the enemy, who were occupying Cospoda and Closevitz, were only half a cannon-shot off, they perceived nothing.

On the morning of October 14 a thick fog covered the country and favoured our movements. Augereau's second division made a feigned attack, advancing from Jena through the Mühlthal by the Weimar road. Believing this to be the only point by which we could issue from Jena, the enemy had massed a considerable force there. But while he was preparing to defend the narrow passage with vigour, the Emperor Napoleon caused the troops which he had assembled on the Landgrafenberg during the night to debouch into the plain, and drew them up in order of battle. The first cannon-shots, aided by a light breeze, dispersed the fog, the sun shone out brilliantly, and the Prussians were aghast at seeing the French army deployed in line in their front and advancing to the contest. They could not understand how we had arrived on the plateau while they believed us at the farther end of the Jena valley, with no other means of getting at them but the Weimar road, which they were carefully watching. We engaged without loss of time, and the first line of the Prussians and Saxons, under the Prince of Hohenlohe, was forced to give way. Their reserve was advancing, but we received a strong reinforcement on our side. Ney's corps and Murat's cavalry, which had been delayed in the defile, emerging into the plain, came into action. A Prussian army corps commanded by

General Ruchel checked our columns for a moment, but it was charged by the French cavalry and almost annihilated, General Ruchel being killed.

Augereau's first division, on descending from the Landgrafenberg into the plain, joined the second arriving at the Mühlthal, and the corps, following the road from Vienna to Weimar, captured Cospoda and then the wood of Iserstädt, while Lannes took Vierzehnheiligen, and Soult Hermstädt. The Prussian infantry fought badly and the cavalry did not do much better. We often saw it coming on with loud shouts, but, intimidated by the calm attitude of our battalions, it never dared to push the charge home. On getting within fifty paces of our line it would wheel about, pursued by a hail of bullets and the hoots of our soldiers. The Saxons fought with courage; they resisted Augereau's corps for a long time, and only after the retreat of the Prussian troops did they form in two great squares and begin to retire firing. Augereau, admiring the courage of the Saxons, and wishing to spare these brave fellows unnecessary bloodshed, sent a flag of truce to invite them to surrender, as they had no longer any hope of support. But just at that moment Prince Murat, coming up with his cavalry, launched his cuirassiers and dragoons on the Saxon squares; by their resolute charge they broke them and compelled them to lay down their arms. But the next day the Emperor let them go free and sent them back to their sovereign, with whom he lost no time in making peace.

The whole Prussian force retired completely routed along the Weimar road. The fugitives, with their artillery and baggage, were crowded at the gates of the city when the French appeared. Panic-stricken at the sight of them, the whole mob fled in the greatest disorder, leaving a great number of prisoners, flags, guns and baggage in our hands.

The town of Weimar, which has been called the 'modern Athens,' was at that period inhabited by many distinguished artists and men of science and letters, assembled there from all parts of Germany under the enlightened patronage of the reigning duke. The noise of the cannon, the passage of the fugitives, the entry of the conquerors caused a lively emotion in this peaceable and studious population. Marshals Lannes and Soult preserved perfect order, and beyond having to supply the necessary provisions for the troops, the town underwent no exactions. The Prince of Weimar was serving in the Prussian army, nevertheless his palace, in which the princess had remained, was respected, and none of the marshals took up

his quarters there. Marshal Augereau's were established near the gate of the town, in the house of the prince's chief gardener. All the servants of the establishment having fled, the staff found nothing to eat, and was reduced to sup off pineapples and hothouse plums—light food for people who had eaten nothing for twenty-four hours, had passed the previous night on their legs, and the whole day in fighting. But we had won, and that magic word makes privation easy to bear.

The Emperor returned to sleep at Jena, where he received news of a success no less than that which he had himself won. The peculiarity of the battle of Jena was that it was, if one may so say, double, for neither the French nor the Prussian army was wholly before Jena. Both were divided into two parts and fought two separate battles. While the Emperor, issuing from Jena at the head of the corps under Augereau, Lannes, Soult, and Ney, with his Guard and Murat's cavalry, was beating in the manner described the Prussian force under Prince Hohenlohe and General Ruchel, the King of Prussia, at the head of his main army, commanded by the famous Duke of Brunswick and Marshals Mollendorf and Kalkreuth, had marched from Weimar towards Naumburg, and slept at the village of Auerstädt, not far from the French corps of Bernadotte and Davout, who were in Naumburg and the neighbouring villages. In order to rejoin the Emperor on the side towards Apolda, in the level ground beyond Jena, Bernadotte and Davout had to pass the Saale in front of Naumburg and traverse the narrow hilly defile of Kösen. Although Davout supposed the King of Prussia and the bulk of his army to be in front of the Emperor, and had no idea that they were so close to him as Auerstädt, the careful soldier took possession during the night of the defile of Kösen and the steep hills enclosing it. The King of Prussia and his marshals had omitted to occupy them, imitating the mistake which the Prince of Hohenlohe had committed at Jena in not guarding the Landgrafenberg. The united troops of Bernadotte and Davout amounted only to 44,000 men, while the King of Prussia had 80,000. At daybreak on the 14th the French marshals learnt the superiority of the forces which they had to fight, so on all accounts it was their duty to act in concert. Davout, realising this, declared that he was quite willing to put himself under the orders of Bernadotte; but the latter, making small account of laurels which he had to share with another, and unable to make a sacrifice in the interest of his country, thought fit to act independently. His pretext was that as the Emperor had ordered

him to be at Dornburg by the 13th, he must proceed there on the 14th, although Napoleon had written to him in the night that, if by any chance he was still at Naumburg, he was to stay there and support Davout.[1] Bernadotte, thinking this duty below his reputation, left to Davout the task of defending himself as best he could, while he marched along the Saale to Dornburg. Though he did not find a single enemy there, and from the high position which he occupied could see the terrible combat which the intrepid Davout was waging two leagues away, Bernadotte ordered his division to bivouac and quietly prepare their soup. In vain did his generals reproach him with this culpable inaction; he would not stir. Whence it happened that Davout, having with him only the 25,000 men composing the divisions of Friant, Morand, and Gudin, had to oppose them to more than 80,000 Prussians, inspirited by the presence of their King.

Issuing from the Kösen defile, the French had drawn up near the village of Hasenhausen, and it was really at this point that the battle took place, for the Emperor was mistaken in thinking that he had in front of him at Jena the King and the bulk of the Prussian army. The fight sustained by Davout's troops was one of the most terrible in our history. His divisions, after having triumphantly resisted all the attacks of the enemy's infantry, formed square, repelled numerous cavalry charges, and, not content with that, advanced with such resolution that the Prussians gave way at all points, leaving the ground strewn with dead and wounded. The Duke of Brunswick[2] and General Schmettau were killed, Marshal Mollendorf severely wounded and taken prisoner. The King of Prussia and his troops executed a retreat on Weimar in pretty good order, expecting to rally in rear of the victorious corps, as they supposed, of Prince Hohenlohe and General Ruchel. These, meanwhile, beaten by Napoleon, were from their side coming to seek a support from the troops under the King. The two huge bodies of beaten and demoralised troops having come together on the Erfurt road, the appear-

[1] [There is no evidence whatever that any message to this effect was sent, still less that it ever reached Bernadotte. The story was, in all probability, invented when it became the cue of Bonapartist writers to blacken that marshal by every possible means; and General Marbot could hardly be expected to test its truth. Of course he does not profess to vouch for it from his own knowledge.]

[2] [The Duke of Brunswick was not killed on the spot, though grievously wounded. He lived long enough to be grossly insulted by Napoleon, and died at Altona, on his way to England. His son, 'Brunswick's fated chieftain,' fell at Quatre Bras.]

ance of some French regiments was sufficient to throw them into the greatest confusion. The rout was complete. Thus the bragging of the Prussian officers was punished. The results of this victory were incalculable and made us masters of nearly the whole of Prussia.

The Emperor expressed his great satisfaction with Marshal Davout and the divisions under him in a general order which was read to all the companies and even to the wounded in the ambulances. In the following year Napoleon created Davout Duke of Auerstädt, although the battle was fought less in that village than in Hasenhausen; but the King of Prussia had had his head-quarters at Auerstädt, and the enemy had given that name to the battle which the French call Jena. The army expected to see Bernadotte severely punished, but he got off with a smart reprimand. The Emperor feared as it would seem to vex his brother Joseph, whose sister-in-law, Mademoiselle Clary, Bernadotte had married. We shall see later on how Bernadotte's behaviour on the day of that battle was in some sense his first step to the throne of Sweden.

I was not wounded at Jena, but I was taken in in a way which after forty years it still awakens my wrath to remember. At the moment when Augereau's corps was attacking the Saxons, the marshal sent me to General Durosnel, commanding a brigade of chasseurs, with orders to charge the enemy's cavalry. I was to guide the brigade by a road which I had already reconnoitred. I hastened to place myself at the head of our chasseurs, who were dashing on the Saxon squadrons. These latter resisted bravely, but after a short mêlée were compelled to retire with loss. Towards the end of the fight I found myself face to face with a hussar officer in the white uniform of Prince Albert of Saxony's regiment. I summoned him at the sabre's point to surrender, which he did by handing me his weapon. The combat over, I was generous enough to give it back to him, as is the practice in such cases between officers, and I added that, although by the laws of war his horse belonged to me, I did not wish to deprive him of it. He thanked me warmly and followed me in the direction which I was taking to return to the marshal, to whom I looked forward to presenting my prisoner. But as soon as we were 500 paces from the French chasseurs, the confounded Saxon officer, who was on my left, drew his sabre, laid open my horse's shoulder, and was on the point of striking me had I not thrown myself upon him, although I had not my sabre in my hand. But as our bodies were in contact he had not room to bring his blade to bear on me, seeing which he caught me by my epaulette—for I was in full uniform that

day—and pulled hard enough to make me lose my balance. My saddle turned round, and there I was with one leg in the air and my head downwards, while the Saxon, going off at full gallop, returned to what remained of the enemy's army. I was furious both at the position in which I found myself and at the ingratitude with which the stranger repaid my kind treatment of him. So, as soon as the Saxon army was captured, I went to look for my hussar officer and give him a good lesson, but he had disappeared.

I have said that our new ally, the Grand Duke of Hesse-Darmstadt, had united his troops to those of the Emperor. This brigade, which was attached to the 7th corps, had a uniform exactly like that of the Prussians, so that during the action many Hessians were killed or wounded. My young friend, Lieutenant Stoch, was on the point of meeting the same fate, our hussars having already got hold of him, when he recognised me, and called to me, and I made them let him go.

The Emperor richly rewarded the parson of Jena, and the Elector of Saxony, when, as the result of the victories of his new ally Napoleon, he had become king, also rewarded this priest, who lived very peaceably till 1814, at which time he took refuge in France to escape the vengeance of the Prussians. They carried him off and imprisoned him in a fortress for two or three years, then the King of Saxony interceded in his favour with Louis XVIII., and he claimed the priest as having been arrested without authority. The Prussians agreed to release him, and he came to live at Paris.

After the victory of Jena the Emperor gave orders to pursue the enemy in every direction, and our columns made a vast number of prisoners. The King of Prussia only reached Berlin by way of Magdeburg with great difficulty, and it is even asserted that the Queen was on the point of falling into the hands of our advanced guard.

Augereau's corps crossed the Elbe near Dessau. It would take too long to recount the disasters of the Prussian army; it must be sufficient to say that of the troops which had marched against the French not one battalion escaped: they were all captured before the end of the month. The fortresses of Torgau, Erfurt, and Wittenberg opened their gates to the conquerors, who marched on Berlin. Napoleon halted at Potsdam and visited the tomb of Frederick the Great; then he went on to Berlin, where, contrary to his practice, Davout's corps marched at the head of the procession, an honour which it well deserved, for it had done the most fighting of all; Augereau's corps followed, and then the Guard.

CHAPTER XXVI.

My first feeling on returning to Berlin, which I had left not long before a brilliant capital, was one of sympathy with a patriotic population thus brought low by defeat, invasion, and the loss of relations and friends. The entry of the 'noble Guard,' however, disarmed and prisoners, aroused in me very different sentiments. The young officers who had sharpened their sabres on the steps of the French Embassy were now humble enough. They had begged to be taken round, not through, Berlin; not caring to be paraded in view of the inhabitants who had been witnesses of their old swagger. For this very reason the Emperor gave directions to the troops guarding them to march them through the street in which the French Embassy stood. This little bit of revenge was not disapproved by the Berliners, who had no love for the 'noble Guard,' and charged them with having driven the King into war. Marshal Augereau was quartered outside the town at the château of Belle Vue, belonging to Prince Ferdinand, the only surviving brother of Frederick the Great, and father of Prince Lewis, killed at Saalfeld. The venerable old man was plunged in grief, aggravated by the fact that, in opposition to all the Court, and especially to his lamented son, he had been strongly against the war, and had foretold the ills which it would bring on Prussia. Marshal Augereau felt bound to call upon Prince Ferdinand, who had removed to a palace in the city. He was most kindly received, and the poor father told him that he had just learnt that his younger and only remaining son, Prince Augustus, was among the prisoners at the gate of the town, and that he would like much to embrace him before his departure for France. As his great age prevented him from going to his son, the marshal, certain that the Emperor would not disapprove, ordered me to mount at once, find Prince Augustus, and bring him back with me. The meeting of the young prince with his aged parents was a most touching sight. To console the family as much as lay in his power, the kind marshal went in person to the Emperor, and returned with authority to leave

the young prince with his family as a prisoner on parole, for which Prince Ferdinand was deeply grateful.

The victory of Jena had immense results. Not only the campaigning troops, but the garrisons of the fortresses were utterly demoralised. Magdeburg surrendered without attempting defence, Spandau did the same, Stettin opened its gates to a division of cavalry, and the governor of Custrin sent boats to our side of the Oder to convey the French troops into the place which it would otherwise have required a several months' siege to capture. Every day we heard of the capitulation of an army corps or the surrender of some fortress. The faulty organisation of the Prussian troops became more obvious than ever. The foreign soldiers, especially those who had been enlisted by force, seized the chance of recovering their freedom, deserting in bodies, or remaining in the rear to surrender to the French.

Besides the territory conquered from the Prussians, Napoleon confiscated the estates of the Elector of Hesse-Cassel, a punishment which his duplicity deserved. This prince, though summoned some time before the war to declare for Prussia or for France, had put both off with promises, waiting to array himself on the side of the conqueror. The avaricious sovereign had amassed a large treasure by selling his own subjects to the English. They were employed to fight the Americans in the War of Independence. Disloyal to his relations, he had offered to ally himself to the French, on condition that the Emperor would give him their states, so nobody regretted him. But his hurried departure was the cause of a remarkable incident which as yet is little known.

When forced to leave Cassel in a hurry to take refuge in England, the Elector of Hesse, who was supposed to be the richest man in Europe, being unable to bring away the whole of his treasure, sent for a Frankfort Jew, named Rothschild, an obscure banker of the third rank, known only for the scrupulous practice of his religion. This seems to have decided the Elector to entrust to him 15,000,000 frs. in specie. The interest of the money was to be the banker's, and he was only to be bound to return the capital.

When the palace of Cassel was occupied by our troops the agents of the French treasury seized property of great value, especially pictures, but no coined money was found, yet it appeared impossible that in his hasty flight the Elector could have carried away the whole of his immense fortune. Now since, by what are conventionally called the laws of war, the capital and the interest of securities found in a hostile country

belong of right to the conqueror, it became important to know what had become of the Cassel treasure. Inquiry showed that before his departure the Elector had passed a whole day with the Jew Rothschild. An imperial commission visited him and minutely examined his safes and his cash books; but it was in vain: no trace of the Elector's deposit could be found. Threats and intimidation had no success until the commission, feeling sure that no personal interest could induce a man so religious as Rothschild to perjure himself, proposed to administer an oath to him. He refused to take it. There was talk of arresting him, but the Emperor, thinking this a useless act of violence, forbad it. Then they had recourse to a not very honourable method. Unable to overcome the banker's resistance, they tried to gain him over by the bait of profit. They proposed to leave him half the treasure if he would give up the other half to the French administration. A receipt for the whole, accompanied by a deed of seizure, should be given him to prove that he had only yielded to force and to prevent any claim from lying against him; but the Jew's honesty rejected this suggestion also, and his persecutors, tired out, left him in peace. Thus the 15,000,000 frs. remained in Rothschild's hands from 1806 till the fall of the Empire in 1814. Then the Elector returned to his states, and the banker returned him his deposit as he had received it. You may imagine the sum which a capital of 15,000,000 frs. would produce in the hands of a Jew banker of Frankfort. From this time dates the opulence of the Rothschilds, who thus owe to their ancestor's honesty the high place which they now hold in the finance of all civilised countries.

But I must resume my narrative. The Emperor reviewed every day the troops which kept passing through Berlin on their way to the Oder in pursuit of the enemy. During his stay in the Prussian capital Napoleon performed that well-known act of magnanimity in granting to the Princess of Hatzfeld the pardon of her husband, who held the office of burgomaster at Berlin, and availed himself of the facilities which that post offered to inform the Prussian generals of the movements of the French army.[1] Such conduct among

[1] [As a matter of fact he seems merely to have sent an account to the King of the entry of the French into Berlin. It was on this occasion that Napoleon, 'in order to destroy the only proof of her husband's guilt,' burnt before the eyes of the princess a letter of which he had kept a copy. The prince's life was really spared mainly at the instance of Rapp, Duroc, and others. 'Never before,' says Lanfrey, 'was a reputation for clemency earned by sparing the life of an innocent man.']

civilised nations is regarded as that of a spy, and punished with death. The Emperor's generosity on this occasion produced a very good effect on the minds of the Prussian people.

During our stay at Berlin, I was agreeably surprised by the arrival of my brother Adolphe, whom I supposed to be at the Isle of France. On learning that hostilities had been renewed on the Continent, he asked and obtained leave from General Decaen, commanding the French forces in the East Indies, to return to France, when he hastened to rejoin the Grand Army. Marshal Lefebvre offered to take my brother on his staff; but Adolphe preferred to be an extra aide-de-camp to Augereau—a mistake, as it turned out, for it injured both of us.

Another meeting, not less unexpected, I had at Berlin. As I was one evening walking with my comrades 'unter den Linden' I saw a group of sergeants of the 1st Hussars approaching. One of them left the group, ran up, and threw his arms round my neck. It was my old mentor, the elder Pertelay, who said, crying for delight: 'Is it you, my boy?' The officers with whom I was were at first not a little astonished to see a sergeant on so familiar terms with a lieutenant, but their surprise was at an end when I told them of my former relations with the brave old fellow. He was never tired of embracing me and saying to his comrades: 'Look at him! I made him what he is!' The good man was really convinced that to his lessons I owed my advancement; and when breakfasting with me the next day, he plied me with the most comical advice, highly sensible as he thought, and the very thing to put a finish on my military education. We shall yet come across this typical hussar of the old school in Spain.

While still at Berlin I heard of the capture at Prenzlow of Prince Hohenlohe's army by Lannes and Murat. Blücher's corps alone remained in the field. Pressed by Soult and Bernadotte, he violated the neutrality of the town of Lubeck by taking shelter there, but was pursued and forced to surrender with 16,000 men.

Here I may mention a curious fact, showing how chance influences the destinies of men and empires. As you have seen, Bernadotte neglected his duty on the day of Jena by holding aloof while Davout was fighting close by against vastly superior forces. This conduct, for which it is hard to find a name bad enough, aided him to rise to the throne of

Sweden. After the battle, the Emperor, though furious with him, entrusted to him the task of pursuing the enemy, since his corps, which had not fired a shot, was in better fighting trim than those which had experienced losses. Bernadotte accordingly went on the track of the Prussians, whom he beat first of all at Hall, then, with support from Soult, at Lubeck. Now, as chance would have it, at the moment when the French were attacking Lubeck, the vessels sent by Gustavus IV. with a division of Swedish infantry to the aid of the Prussians were entering the harbour, and the Swedish troops had hardly disembarked when they were compelled to lay down their arms to Bernadotte's force. The marshal, whose manners, when he liked, were, I must admit, very attractive, was especially desirous to earn in the strangers' eyes the character of a well-bred man. He therefore treated the Swedish officers with much friendliness, and after allowing them honourable terms of capitulation, restored them their horses and baggage, provided for their wants, and, inviting the commander-in-chief, Count Moerner, the generals, and field-officers to his quarters, showed them so much kind consideration that on returning to their own country the Swedes extolled Marshal Bernadotte's magnanimity up and down.

When, some years later, the incapable Gustavus IV. was driven from his throne by a revolution, and succeeded by his uncle, the Duke of Sudermania, who was old and childless, the assembled states chose as Crown Prince the Duke of Holstein-Augustenburg. He, however, did not long enjoy the dignity, being poisoned, as it was supposed, in 1811. The states assembled again to choose an heir to the throne, and after some hesitation between the various German princes who offered themselves for the place, Count Moerner, remembering Bernadotte's generous conduct at Lubeck, proposed his name. He dwelt on his military talents and on his connection, through his wife, with the Bonapartes; and various officers who had been present at Lubeck having seconded the general's recommendation, Bernadotte was almost unanimously elected Crown Prince, and some years later mounted the throne. We shall see in due course how, when on the steps of that throne, to which he had been carried by the glory won at the head of French armies, he showed his ingratitude towards his country.

But we must now return to Prussia. Her main forces had been destroyed by Napoleon, who occupied her capital, as well as a great part of her provinces, while our victorious armies

were touching the Vistula, the barrier separating Northern from Central Europe. Marshal Augereau's corps, after remaining a fortnight at Berlin, left that town about mid-November, crossed the Oder at Custrin, and reached the banks of the Vistula at Bromberg. We were in Poland—the poorest and least civilised country in Europe. Beyond the Oder we found no more high roads; we marched through shifting sands or fearful mud. The land was, for the most part, uncultivated; the few inhabitants whom we met inconceivably filthy. The weather, which had been magnificent during the month of October and the first part of November, became horrible; it rained or snowed incessantly. Provisions became very scarce —no more wine, hardly any beer, and what there was exceedingly bad; muddy water, no bread, and quarters for which we had to fight with the pigs and the cows. The soldiers said: 'Is this what the Poles have the impudence to call their country?' The Emperor himself had his eyes opened, for, having come to reconstitute Poland, he had hoped that the whole population of the country would rise as one man at the approach of the French armies. But no one stirred. In vain, to excite their enthusiasm, did the Emperor write to the famous General Kosciusko, who had headed the last insurrection, to come and join him; Kosciusko remained tranquilly in Switzerland, answering all reproaches addressed to him by saying that he knew too well the careless and fickle character of his compatriots to have any hope that they would succeed in freeing themselves even with the aid of the French. Not being able to attract Kosciusko, the Emperor, wishing at least to make capital out of his renown, addressed a proclamation to the Poles in his name. Not a soul took up arms, although our troops were occupying several provinces of the old Poland and even its capital. The Poles would not rise until Napoleon had declared Poland to be re-established, and he had no notion of doing this until the Poles had risen against their oppressor, which they would not do.

While the 7th corps was at Bromberg, Duroc, Grand Marshal of the Imperial Household, arrived in the middle of the night at Augereau's quarters. The marshal sent for me and bade me get ready to accompany Duroc, who was on his way to Graudenz with a flag of truce to the King of Prussia, and required an officer to take the place of his aide-de-camp, whom he had just sent to Posen with despatches from the Emperor. They selected me because they remembered that in the previous August I had been on a mission to the Prussian

Court, so that I knew most of the officials, as well as the ways of it. I was soon ready; the Marshal of the Household took me in his carriage, and going down the left bank of the Vistula, occupied by our troops, we crossed the river by a ferry opposite Graudenz. We got rooms in the town, and went on immediately to the citadel, where all the Prussian royal family had taken refuge after losing four-fifths of their states. The Vistula lay between the two armies. We found the King calm and resigned. The Queen, whom I had lately seen so beautiful, was much changed, and appeared consumed with grief. She could not conceal from herself that she had urged the King to make war, and was thus the chief cause of the misfortunes of her country, and in no favour with its inhabitants. No more agreeable messenger could have been sent to the King of Prussia than Duroc, who had been ambassador at Berlin, and was well known to both King and Queen, and esteemed for the suavity of his disposition. I was too insignificant to be counted; still the King and Queen recognised me, and addressed some courteous words to me.

I found the Prussian officers about the Court in a mood very far from their swagger of the previous August. Their recent defeat had done much to modify their opinion of the French army. I did not, however, choose to take advantage of this, and carefully avoided speaking of Jena and our other victories. The matters of which Marshal Duroc had to treat with the King of Prussia, in reference to a letter which the King had addressed to Napoleon with a view of obtaining peace, occupied two days. I employed these in reading and walking about on the melancholy drill ground of the fortress. I did not like to go on the ramparts, even for the sake of the admirable view over the Vistula, fearing that I might be suspected of examining the fortifications and armament.

In the engagements which had taken place between Jena and the Vistula, the Prussians had captured from us not more than a hundred prisoners. These were employed on the earthworks of the fortress of Graudenz; and Marshal Duroc had entrusted me with the distribution of aid to the poor fellows, whose lot was made all the worse by the view which they had of the French troops just across the Vistula. The neighbourhood of his comrades on the other bank, and the contrast of his position with theirs, had moved one of the prisoners, a trooper of the 3rd Dragoons, named Harpin, to employ every means in his power to get out of the hands of the Prussians. It was not an easy job, for he had first to get out of the fortress,

then to cross the Vistula. But determination can do a great deal. Being employed by the master carpenter to stack timber, Harpin had secretly constructed a little raft; by the aid of a large cable he had succeeded in letting down first his raft and then himself to the foot of the ramparts. He had launched his raft, and was on the point of embarking, when he was surprised by a patrol, taken back to the fortress, and put in a cell. Next day the Prussian commandant, following the usage of the Prussian army, sentenced Harpin to fifty strokes with a stick. In vain did the dragoon protest that being a Frenchman they had no right to bring him under Prussian regulations; he was a prisoner, and his protest unheeded. He was actually being led to the wooden frame to which he was to be fastened, and two soldiers were making ready to inflict the punishment. At that moment, wanting to get a book out of Duroc's carriage, which was standing on the drill ground, I caught sight of Harpin struggling in the midst of the Prussian soldiers, who were trying to tie him up. Indignant at the sight of a French soldier about to be flogged, I flew towards him sword in hand, threatening to kill the first man who dared to put the disgrace of a blow on a soldier of the Emperor. The marshal's carriage was guarded by one of Napoleon's couriers, known in every post-house of Europe under the name of Moustache. This man was of herculean strength and approved courage, and had attended the Emperor on twenty battlefields. When he saw me surrounded by the Prussians, he ran to me and brought at my order four loaded pistols which were in the carriage. We set Harpin loose; I gave him a brace of pistols, made him get into the carriage, and placing Moustache by him, declared to the quarter-master-sergeant that, as the carriage was the Emperor's and bore his arms, it was for the French dragoon a sanctuary which I forbad any Prussian to enter, on pain of getting a bullet through his head. At the same time I ordered Moustache and Harpin to fire if anyone attempted to get in. The quarter-master, seeing me resolute, left his prisoner for the moment to consult his superior officers. Then I left Moustache and Harpin, pistols in hand, in the carriage, and went to the King's quarters. There I requested an aide-de-camp to be so kind as to go into his Majesty's room and tell Marshal Duroc that I wished to speak to him on a matter of the utmost urgency. Duroc came out, and I reported what was going on.

On learning that they wanted to flog a French soldier, the marshal, sharing my indignation, returned straightway to the

King, and protested warmly, adding that, if the sentence was carried out, he felt sure that the Emperor would take reprisals by flogging not soldiers, but Prussian officers who were prisoners of war. The King, a kindly man, saw that soldiers of other nations should be treated in accordance with their own point of honour, and gave orders that Harpin should be set at liberty. In order to please Napoleon, to whom he was at that moment suing for peace, he proposed to Duroc to exchange his hundred and fifty French prisoners for an equal number of Prussians. Duroc accepted, and an aide-de-camp of the King's went with me to announce the good news to the prisoners, who were overjoyed. We shipped them off at once, and an hour later they were across the Vistula, and with their comrades.

Marshal Duroc and I left Graudenz the next day. He approved what I had done, and told me afterwards that he had reported it to the Emperor, who quite agreed. So much so, that he had warned the Prussians and the Russians that, if they flogged any of his soldiers, he would shoot all their officers who fell into his hands.

I rejoined the 7th corps at Bromberg, and we soon followed up the left bank of the Vistula, to approach Warsaw. Marshal Augereau's head-quarters were established at Mallochich. On December 19 the Emperor arrived at Warsaw and prepared to cross the Vistula. Then the 7th corps marched down the left bank again to Utrata, and on the opposite bank we saw, for the first time in this campaign, the Russian outposts.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Vistula is rapid and broad. We expected that the Emperor would limit his winter operations to establishing his army, covered by the river, in cantonments until the spring. It turned out, however, otherwise. The corps of Davout and Lannes, with the Guard, crossed the Vistula at Warsaw; Augereau and his troops at Utrata, and marched on Plusk, whence we continued to the bank of the Wkra, one of the tributaries of the Bug. Having passed the Vistula the whole French army was in presence of the Russians, and the Emperor ordered an attack for December 24. A thaw and rain rendered evolutions exceedingly difficult on the clayey soil, for in this country there was no metalled road. Omitting the various engagements fought that day in forcing the passage of the Bug, I will only say that Augereau, having the duty of securing that of the Wkra, caused General Desjardins' division to attack Colozomb and General Heudelet's Sochocyn, directing the former attack in person. The Russians, after burning the existing bridge, had erected a redoubt on the left bank, defended by cannon and a strong force of infantry; but they forgot to destroy a store of timber and planks on the right bank by which we were coming up. Of these materials our sappers adroitly made use to construct a provisional bridge in face of a brisk fire from the enemy, which caused the loss of some men of the 14th of the line. The planks of the new bridge, not yet fixed, were swaying under the tread of our soldiers when the colonel of the 14th, M. Savary, brother of the Emperor's aide-de-camp, was rash enough to cross on horseback with a view of putting himself at the head of his skirmishers. Hardly had he landed on the opposite bank when a Cossack, galloping out, plunged a lance into his heart and escaped into the woods. This was the fifth colonel whom the 14th had had killed before the enemy. You will see by-and-by what an evil fate always attended this unlucky regiment. The passage of the Wkra was carried, the guns were taken, the Russians put to flight, and Desjardins' division occupied Sochocyn, where the enemy had

repulsed Heudelet's attack. As, however, one passage was enough, that attack had been quite unnecessary. Nevertheless, General Heudelet, in a fit of senseless pique, gave orders to renew it. He was again repulsed with some thirty men killed or wounded, among them a captain of engineers, a most promising officer. I have always felt disgusted by this contempt of human life, which at times leads generals to sacrifice their men to their desire of seeing themselves mentioned in despatches.

On the following day, December 25, the Emperor, driving the Russians in front of him, marched to Golymin, having with him his Guard, Murat's cavalry, and the corps of Davout and Augereau, the latter leading. Marshal Lannes took the direction of Pultusk. That day there were some trifling engagements, the enemy retiring with all speed; we bivouacked in the woods. On the 26th we continued in pursuit of the Russians. We were at the time of year when the days are shortest, and in that part of Poland the night at the end of December begins about half-past two. As we approached Golymin sleet was falling, which made it all the darker. We had not seen the enemy since the morning, when, close to Golymin, our scouts, perceiving in the dusk a strong body of troops, whom they could not approach by reason of marshy ground, brought information of them to the marshal. He ordered Colonel Albert to go and reconnoitre this corps with twenty-five mounted chasseurs of his escort, of whom I was put in command. It was a difficult task, for we were in a vast treeless plain, where one might easily go astray. The ground, muddy anyhow, was cut up by swamps, which we could not make out in the darkness; we therefore advanced cautiously, and at length found ourselves twenty-five paces from a line of troops. We supposed at first that it was Davout's corps, but as no one answered our 'Who goes there?' we had no doubt that they belonged to the enemy. Still, to be quite certain, Colonel Albert ordered me to send forward the best mounted trooper to the line which we could perceive in the shadow. I selected a corporal named Schmidt, a man of tried courage. The brave man, advancing alone to within ten paces of a regiment which he recognised as Russian by its helmets, fired his carbine into the thick of the squadron and came quickly back.

In order to explain the silence which the enemy had kept, I must tell you that the Russian force which was in front of us had got separated from the main body, and had lost its way in the wide plains which it knew to be occupied

by the French troops on their way to Golymin. The Russian generals, hoping under cover of the darkness to be able to pass near us without being recognised, had forbidden all speaking, and in the case of our attacking the wounded were to drop without uttering any sound. This order, which only Russian troops could carry out, was so punctually obeyed that when Colonel Albert, in order to let the marshal know that we were in presence of the enemy, ordered his twenty-five chasseurs to fire a volley, not a cry, not a word was heard, and no one replied to us. Only through the darkness we could perceive some hundred troopers silently advancing to cut off our retreat. Then we had to gallop to rejoin our column, but as many of our men got bogged we had to go less rapidly, although we were close pressed by the Russian horsemen, who fortunately met with the same difficulties as we did. Suddenly a fire broke out in a neighbouring farm, and the plain being thus lighted up the Russians began to gallop, and we had to do the same. We were in imminent danger, because, having left the French line from General Desjardins' division, we were returning by the front of General Heudelet's. They, not knowing that we had gone, began to fire in the direction of the enemy, so that we had in the rear a Russian squadron pushing us hard, while we were met by a hail of bullets which wounded several of our troopers and horses. It was no good shouting, 'We are French; cease firing!' the fire continued all the same. Nor can one blame the officers, who took us for the advanced guard of a Russian column, since their officers, in order to deceive us, often used the French language, and had by this means before now succeeded in surprising our regiments in the night. Colonel Albert and I, with the squad of chasseurs, had a very bad moment of it. At last it struck me that the only way to get recognised was to call out to the officers of Heudelet's division by their names, with which they would know that our enemies could not be acquainted. This plan answered, and we were at length admitted within the French line.

The Russian generals, seeing that they were detected, and wishing to continue their retreat, took a step which I much approved, but which the French have never been able to make up their minds to copy. They pointed all their artillery in the direction of the French troops; then, having taken away their team horses, they opened a very heavy fire to keep us at a distance. Meantime they caused their columns to march on, and when their ammunition was exhausted the gunners

retired, leaving the guns to us. Was not this better worth while than to lose a number of men in trying to save this artillery, which would have stuck in the mud every moment and have delayed the retreat?

The violent cannonade of the Russians inflicted all the more loss on us that many of the villages in the plain being on fire, the light of them showing to a distance, allowed the enemy's gunners to make out the masses of our troops, especially those of the cuirassiers and dragoons whom Prince Murat had just brought up, and who, in their white cloaks, formed a good mark to the Russian artillerymen. Accordingly these troopers lost more heavily than the other regiments, and one of our dragoon generals, named Finérol, was cut in two by a cannon-ball. Marshal Augereau, after having carried the suburbs, entered Golymin while Davout was attacking it from another side. The Russian columns were at this moment passing through the town, and knowing that Marshal Lannes was marching to cut off their retreat by capturing Pultusk, three leagues farther on, they were trying to reach that point before him at any price. Therefore, although our soldiers fired upon them at twenty-five paces, they continued their march without replying, because in order to do so they would have had to halt, and every moment was precious. So every division, every regiment, filed past, without saying a word or slackening its pace for a moment. The streets were filled with dying and wounded, but not a groan was to be heard, for they were forbidden. You might have said that we were firing upon shadows. At last our soldiers charged the Russian soldiers with the bayonet, and only when they pierced them could they be convinced that they were dealing with men. We took some thousand prisoners; the rest got off. The marshals debated whether they should pursue, but the weather was so horrible, the night so pitch-dark as soon as one was away from the neighbourhood of the burning houses, the troops so wet and weary, that it was decided to let them rest till daylight.

Golymin was heaped with dead, wounded and baggage when Marshals Murat and Augereau, accompanied by many generals and their staffs, seeking shelter from the icy rain, established themselves in an immense stable near the town. There, each stretching himself on the dung-heap tried to get warm and to sleep, for we had been on horseback more than twenty hours in this frightful weather—the marshals, the colonels, all the bigwigs in short having, as was right, settled

themselves towards the inner end of the stable, so as to be less cold. I, a poor lieutenant, having come in the last, was compelled to lie down close to the doorway, having at the best my body sheltered from the rain but exposed to an icy wind, for there were no doors. It was a disagreeable position when you add that I was dying of hunger, having eaten nothing since the day before. But my lucky star came once more to my help. While the great men, well-sheltered, were sleeping in the warm part of the stable, and the cold was preventing the lieutenants near the door from doing the same, a servant of Prince Murat presented himself at the entry. I remarked in a low voice that his master was asleep. So he gave me a basket for the prince, containing a roast goose, some bread, and some wine, begging me to let his master know that the provision mules would come up in an hour. Having said which he went off to meet them. In possession of these victuals, I took counsel in a low voice with Bro, Mainvielle, and Stoch, who had just as bad places as I, and were just as shivering and hungry. The result of our deliberation was that as Prince Murat was asleep, and his canteen was bound to come up before long, he would find something for breakfast when he awoke, while we should be sent off in all directions without any questions as to what we had got to eat; and that, in consequence, we might, without over-burdening our consciences, devour the contents of the basket; and we did so straightway. I do not know whether I may be forgiven for this page's trick: I only know that I have seldom made a pleasanter meal.

While the troops which had fought at Golymin were thus halted, Napoleon and his Guard were wandering in the plain, the Emperor, as soon as he was warned by the cannonade that an action was beginning, having hurriedly left his quarters two leagues from Golymin, in the hope of being able to reach us by marching straight upon the fire. But the ground was so sodden, the plain so cut up with swamps, and the weather so bad that it took him all night to cover the two leagues, and he only reached the field of battle long after the affair was at an end. On this same day Marshal Lannes with only 20,000 men fought 42,000 Russians at Pultusk, as they were retreating before the other French forces. He caused them great loss, but could not stop them owing to their greatly superior force.[1] For the Emperor to have been able to pursue the Russians the ground ought to have been hardened by frost, whereas, on the

[1] [The French, in fact, were beaten, and Lannes wounded.]

contrary, it was so soft and saturated that we sank in at every step, and several men, notably the servant of an officer of the 7th corps, were drowned, men and horses, in the mud. It became therefore impossible to move the artillery and to push farther into this unknown land. Moreover, the troops were short both of provisions and of boots, and were extremely fatigued. These considerations decided Napoleon to allow them some days' rest, and to canton the whole army in front of the Vistula from the neighbourhood of Warsaw up to the gates of Dantzig. The soldiers were lodged in the villages, and, sheltered at last from the bad weather, received their rations, and were able to repair their accoutrements.

The Emperor returned to Warsaw to plan a new campaign. The divisions of Augereau's corps were distributed in the villages around Plusk, if one may give this name to a jumble of wretched hovels inhabited by dirty Jews. But nearly all the so-called towns of Poland are so built and so inhabited, the nobles, great and small, remaining always in the country, where they get their value out of their lands by employing their peasants on them. The marshal stayed at Christka, a kind of country house built, after the local fashion, of wood. He found a tolerable room there; the aides-de-camp settled themselves as best they could in the rooms and in the outbuildings. As for myself, by hunting about I found a pretty good room in the gardener's house, furnished with a stove. I established myself there with two of my comrades, and leaving the gardener and his family in possession of their not very inviting beds, we made some for ourselves with planks and straw, with which we did very well.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

At Christka we celebrated the New Year's Day of 1807, which was near being the last of my life. The year began, however, very pleasantly for me, for the Emperor, who had not granted any favour to Augereau's staff during the campaign of Austerlitz, repaired his neglect by heaping it with rewards. Colonel Albert was appointed major-general, Major Massy lieutenant-colonel of the 44th, several aides-de-camp were decorated, while Lieutenants Bro, Mainvielle, and I became captains. I was all the more pleased by this promotion that I did not expect it. I had done nothing to earn it, and I was only twenty-four years old. When handing our captains' commissions to Mainvielle, Bro, and myself, Marshal Augereau said: 'We will see which of you three will be colonel first.' It was I, for six years afterwards I was in command of a regiment while my two comrades were still only captains. But it is true that in that space of time I had been six times wounded. As soon as our cantonments were established the enemy took up theirs, fronting but pretty far from us. The Emperor expected that they would let us pass the winter in peace, but it was not so. We only got a month's rest, which was a good deal but not enough.

The Russians, seeing the ground covered with snow and hardened by some sharp frosts, thought that the severe weather would give the men of the North an advantage over the Southerners, little accustomed to endure great cold. Consequently they resolved to attack us, and to this end they caused the greater part of their troops, who were posted in face of ours before Warsaw, to pass in rear of the vast forests which separated them from us, and marched them towards the Lower Vistula upon the cantonments of Bernadotte and Ney, hoping to surprise and crush them before the Emperor with the other corps could come to their support. But Bernadotte and Ney offered a valiant resistance, and Napoleon, warned in time, marched with a considerable force on the enemy's rear, who, threatened with being cut off from his base, retreated towards Königsberg. We had then, on February 1, to leave our comfortable

cantonments, and again begin fighting and sleeping on the snow.

At the head of the centre column, commanded by the Emperor in person, marched Prince Murat's cavalry, then Soult's corps, supported by Augereau's; the Imperial Guard brought up the rear. Davout's corps marched on the right flank of the column, Ney's on the left. Such a body of troops making for the same point would soon exhaust the supplies which the country could furnish, and we suffered much from hunger; the Guard alone, having wagons, carried with it the means of providing rations. The other corps lived how they could—that is to say, they got scarcely anything.

There is little need for me to give many details of the affairs preceding the battle of Eylau, the more so that Augereau's troops, who formed the second line, took no part in them. The most important were those at Mohrungen, Bergfried, Guttstadt, and Waltersdorf. At length, on February 6, the Russians, whom we had pursued for eight days at the sword's point, resolved to halt and show firm front before the little town of Landsberg. They placed eight picked battalions in an excellent position near Hoff, their right resting on that village, their left on a thick wood, their centre covered by a deep and thick ravine, which could only be crossed by a very narrow bridge. The front of the line was defended by eight guns.

The Emperor, arriving with Murat's cavalry in front of this position, thought it better not to wait for Soult and the infantry, who were still some leagues to the rear, and ordered an attack to be made by several regiments of light cavalry. They crossed the ravine by the bridge, but were overwhelmed by volleys of musketry and grape, and driven back in disorder into the ravine, whence they made their escape with much difficulty. Seeing that the efforts of the light cavalry were useless, the Emperor ordered forward a division of dragoons. Their attack was met in the same way, and had no better success. Then Napoleon ordered forward General d'Hautpoul's formidable cuirassiers, who, crossing the bridge and the ravine under a hail of bullets, fell upon the Russian line with such swiftness that they literally laid it flat. The slaughter was fearful; the cuirassiers, furious at the losses sustained by their comrades of the hussars and dragoons, nearly exterminated the eight Russian battalions; all were killed or taken prisoners. The field of battle was a horrible sight. Never was a cavalry charge so completely successful. To testify his satisfaction with the cuirassiers, the Emperor embraced their general in presence of the whole

division. D'Hautpoul exclaimed, 'The only way to show myself worthy of such an honour is to get killed in your Majesty's service.' He kept his word, for the next day he died on the battlefield of Eylau. Such were the men of that time.

The enemy's army having witnessed from the high ground behind Landsberg the destruction of its rear-guard, retired promptly upon Eylau, and we took possession of Landsberg. On February 7 the Russian commander-in-chief, Bennigsen, having made up his mind to accept battle, concentrated his army round Eylau, especially on the position in rear of that town. Murat's cavalry and Soult's infantry captured the first position, but only after an obstinate fight, for the Russians thought it important to hold Ziegelhof, a point which commands Eylau, with the view of making it the centre of their line for the morrow's battle. They were, however, compelled to evacuate the town. Just as it began to seem as though night would put an end to this prelude to a general action, a brisk fusillade broke out in the streets of Eylau.

I know that some military writers on this campaign assert that the Emperor, not wishing to leave the town in possession of the Russians, gave orders to attack it. I am sure that this is a very great mistake, and I base my assertion on the following facts. At the moment when the head of Marshal Augereau's column, coming up by the road from Landsberg, was approaching Ziegelhof, the marshal reached the summit of the plateau, where the Emperor already was, and I *heard* Napoleon say to him, 'They wanted me to carry Eylau this evening, but I do not like night fighting; and besides, I do not wish to push my centre too far forward before Davout has come up with the right wing and Ney with the left. I shall await them therefore till to-morrow on this high ground, which can be defended by artillery, and offers an excellent position for our infantry; and when Ney and Davout are in line we can march simultaneously on the enemy.' After saying this Napoleon gave orders for his bivouac to be arranged below Ziegelhof, and made his Guard encamp all round. But while the Emperor was thus explaining his plans to Marshal Augereau, who highly approved his prudence, the following events were taking place. The Imperial quartermasters, coming from Landsberg with their baggage and servants, had reached our advanced posts at the entrance of Eylau without anyone having told them to halt near Ziegelhof. These officials, who were accustomed to see the Imperial quarters always well

guarded, and had not been warned that they were within a few paces of the Russians, thought only of choosing a good lodging for their master, and established themselves in the post-house, where they unpacked their apparatus, and set to work cooking, and stabling their horses. But in the midst of their preparations they were attacked by an enemy's patrol, and would have been captured but for the aid of the detachment of the Guard which always accompanied the Emperor's outfit. At the sound of the firing the troops of Marshal Soult, who were posted at the gates of the town, ran up to the rescue of Napoleon's baggage, and found the Russian troops already plundering it. The enemy's generals, thinking that the French wished to take possession of Eylau, sent up reinforcements on their side, so that a bloody engagement took place in the streets of the town, which finally remained in our hands.

Though the attack had not been made by the Emperor's orders, he did not refuse to profit by it, and established himself accordingly in the posting-house at Eylau. His Guard and Soult's corps occupied the town, while Murat's cavalry was stationed round it. Augereau's troops were quartered in the little hamlet of Zehen. We had hoped to find some supplies there; but the Russians had plundered everything in their retreat, and our unlucky regiments, who had received no rations for a week, found no better comfort than potatoes and water. The store-wagons of the staff having been left at Landsberg, our supper was even less satisfactory than that of the men, for we could not get any potatoes. At eight in the morning, just as we were about to mount and advance, a servant brought a loaf to the marshal, who, with his usual kindness, shared it with his aides-de-camp. After this frugal meal—the last, as it turned out, which many of us ate—the corps proceeded to take up the position which the Emperor had assigned it.

In conformity with the plan of these Memoirs, I shall not give a detailed account of the battle of Eylau, but confine myself to relating the chief incidents. On the morning of February 8 the position of the armies was as follows. The Russian left was at Serpallen, their centre in front of Auklapen, their right at Schmoditten. They awaited 8,000 Prussians who were to debouch by Althoff, and form the extreme right. The front of the enemy's line was covered by 500 guns, a third at least of large calibre. The French were far less favourably situated, since the wings had not come up, and the Emperor had therefore to go into action with only a portion of the troops on which he had reckoned. Soult's corps was placed at right

and left of Eylau, the Guard in the town, and Augereau's corps between Rothenen and Eylau, fronting towards Serpallen. The enemy thus formed a semicircle, outflanking us, and the two forces occupied ground in which were numerous ponds, which, however, were covered by the snow. Neither side, therefore, noticed them, nor fired ricochet shots to break the ice. If they had, there would have been a second Satschan disaster.[1]

Marshal Davout, who was expected on our right, towards Molwitten, and Marshal Ney, who was to form our left, on the side of Althoff, had not appeared when, soon after sunrise, about eight o'clock, the Russians began the attack by a violent cannonade. Our artillery, though inferior in numbers, replied; and all the more successfully that our gunners, who were by far the better trained, had masses of unsheltered men to aim at, while most of the Russian shot struck the walls of Rothenen and Eylau. Soon the enemy sent forward a strong column to carry the latter place; but it was smartly repulsed by the Guard and Soult's division. At the same moment the Emperor heard with joy that from the top of the church tower Davout's corps could be seen advancing. He came by Molwitten, and marching on Serpallen, drove in the Russian left, pushing them back to Klein Sausgarten.

Marshal Bennigsen, seeing his left beaten and his rear threatened by the bold Davout, resolved to crush him by superior force. Then Napoleon, in order to hinder this movement by a diversion against the enemy's centre, ordered Augereau to attack, though foreseeing that the operation would be difficult. But circumstances arise in battle in which some troops must be sacrificed to secure the safety and victory of the greater part. General Corbineau, the Emperor's aide-de-camp, was killed at our side by a cannon-ball, when bringing Augereau the order to advance. The marshal, passing with his two divisions between Eylau and Rothenen, proceeded boldly against the enemy's centre; and the 14th, our leading regiment, had already captured the position which the Emperor had given orders to carry and hold at all costs, when the heavy guns which were in a semicircle round Augereau belched forth such a hail of grape and canister as had never been seen within human memory. In one instant our two divisions were rent to pieces by the storm of iron. General Desjardins was killed, General Heudelet dangerously wounded. Still they held their ground, until the army corps being almost entirely destroyed,

[1] [See p. 163.]

its fragments had perforce to be recalled to the neighbourhood of the cemetery of Eylau; always excepting the 14th, who, wholly surrounded by the enemy, remained on the little hill which it had occupied. Our position was all the more grievous since a violent wind dashed the thickly-falling snow into our faces. It was impossible to see more than fifteen paces off, so that several French batteries fired upon us as well as those of the enemy. Marshal Augereau was wounded by a grape shot.

Still the devotion of the 7th corps had produced a good effect, for not only had Davout, relieved by our attack, been able to hold his positions, but, further, he had captured Klein Sausgarten, and even pushed his advance-guard as far as Kuschitten, in rear of the enemy. At this moment the Emperor, wishing to strike the final blow, ordered Murat with ninety squadrons to advance between Eylau and Rothenen. The terrible weight of this mass broke the Russian centre, upon which it charged with the sabre, and threw it into complete disorder. The brave General d'Hautpoul was killed at the head of his cuirassiers, so also was General Dahlmann, who had succeeded General Morland in the command of the chasseurs of the guard.

The success of our cavalry made victory certain. In vain did 8,000 Prussians, who had escaped Ney's pursuit, advancing by way of Althoff, attempt a new attack. They bore (it is hard to say why) on Kuschitten, instead of marching on Eylau. Davout beat them back, and the arrival of Ney's corps, which appeared towards evening at Schmoditten, making Bennigsen fear that his communications might be cut, he gave orders for a retreat on Königsberg, leaving the French masters of that frightful battlefield covered with dying men and corpses. Never since the invention of gunpowder had its effects been so terrible. Of all battles, ancient or modern, Eylau was that in which the proportion of loss to combatants was greatest.[1] The Russians had 25,000 men disabled, and although the number of French who were touched by steel or lead was reported at 10,000 only, I estimate them as at least 20,000. The total for the two armies was thus 45,000 men, of whom more than half died. Augereau's corps was almost entirely destroyed, since of 15,000 combatants present under arms when the action began, there remained in the evening only

[1] [Marbot is not quite correct here. The loss (about one in three of those engaged) was quite as great at the Borodine, and at Salamanca; nearly as great at Marengo; greater at Zornsdorf. In ancient battles of course a similar proportion was not uncommon.]

3,000, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Massy, the marshal, all the generals and all the colonels being either killed or wounded.

It is difficult to understand why Bennigsen, knowing that Davout and Ney had not yet come up, did not profit by their absence to attack the town of Eylau at daybreak with his powerful centre, instead of wasting precious time in a cannonade. For his superior force would certainly have made him master of the town before Davout could come up, and then the Emperor would have been sorry that he advanced so far, instead of entrenching himself on the plateau of Ziegelhof, and there awaiting his wings as he had originally intended. The day after the battle he gave orders for a pursuit as far as the gates of Königsberg, but as the town was fortified it was not thought prudent to attack it with weakened forces, the more so that almost all the Russian army was in and about the place.

Napoleon passed several days at Eylau to restore the wounded and reorganise the armies. Augereau's corps having been almost destroyed, what was left of it was distributed among the other corps, and the marshal obtained leave to return to France to get cured of his wound. The Emperor, seeing that the main Russian army was at a distance,[1] cantoned his troops in the towns and villages on the east side of the Lower Vistula. The only thing that happened during the rest of the winter was the capture of Dantzig by the French.[2] Hostilities in the open did not recommence till the month of June, as we shall see in due course.

[1] [The retreat of the enemy hardly appears an adequate reason for his own retreat to a point some hundred miles in rear of the field of battle. As a matter of fact, Napoleon was worse beaten at Eylau than it suited him to admit; and but for the abominable state of the enemy's commissariat (that everlasting curse of Russian armies) and the slackness of the English Government, the retreat from Moscow might have been anticipated.]

[2] [In the following May. 'Winter,' of course, is used technically.]

CHAPTER XXIX.

I DID not wish to interrupt my account of the battle of Eylau to tell you what befell me in that terrible conflict. To enable you to understand my story, I must go back to the autumn of 1805, when the officers of the Grand Army, among their preparations for the battle of Austerlitz, were completing their outfits. I had two good horses, the third, for whom I was looking, my charger, was to be better still. It was a difficult thing to find, for though horses were far less dear than now, their price was pretty high, and I had not much money; but chance served me admirably. I met a learned German, Herr von Aister, whom I had known when he was a professor at Sorèze. He had become tutor to the children of a rich Swiss banker, M. Scherer, established at Paris in partnership with M. Finguerlin. He informed me that M. Finguerlin, a wealthy man, living in fine style, had a large stud, in the first rank of which figured a lovely mare, called Lisette, easy in her paces, as light as a deer, and so well broken that a child could lead her. But this mare, when she was ridden, had a terrible fault, and fortunately a rare one: she bit like a bulldog, and furiously attacked people whom she disliked, which decided M. Finguerlin to sell her. She was bought for Mme. de Lauriston, whose husband, one of the Emperor's aides-de-camp, had written to her to get his campaigning outfit ready. When selling the mare, M. Finguerlin had forgotten to mention her fault, and that very evening a groom was found disembowelled at her feet. Mme. de Lauriston, reasonably alarmed, brought an action to cancel the bargain; not only did she get her verdict, but, in order to prevent further disasters, the police ordered that a written statement should be placed in Lisette's stall to inform purchasers of her ferocity, and that any bargain with regard to her should be void unless the purchaser declared in writing that his attention had been called to the notice. You may suppose that with such a character as this the mare was not easy to dispose of, and thus Herr von Aister informed me that her

owner had decided to let her go for what anyone would give. I offered 1,000 francs, and M. Finguerlin delivered Lisette to me, though she had cost him 5,000. This animal gave me a good deal of trouble for some months. It took four or five men to saddle her, and you could only bridle her by covering her eyes and fastening all four legs; but once you were on her back, you found her a really incomparable mount.

However, since while in my possession she had already bitten several people, and had not spared me, I was thinking of parting with her. But I had meanwhile engaged in my service Francis Woirland, a man who was afraid of nothing, and he, before going near Lisette, whose bad character had been mentioned to him, armed himself with a good hot roast leg of mutton. When the animal flew at him to bite him, he held out the mutton; she seized it in her teeth, and burning her gums, palate, and tongue, gave a scream, let the mutton drop, and from that moment was perfectly submissive to Woirland, and did not venture to attack him again. I employed the same method with a like result. Lisette became as docile as a dog, and allowed me and my servant to approach her freely. She even became a little more tractable towards the stablemen of the staff, whom she saw every day, but woe to the strangers who passed near her! I could quote twenty instances of her ferocity, but I will confine myself to one. While Marshal Augereau was staying at the château of Bellevue, near Berlin, the servants of the staff, having observed that when they went to dinner someone stole the sacks of corn that were left in the stable, got Woirland to unfasten Lisette and leave her near the door. The thief arrived, slipped into the stable, and was in the act of carrying off a sack, when the mare seized him by the nape of the neck, dragged him into the middle of the yard and trampled on him till she broke two of his ribs. At the shrieks of the thief, people ran up, but Lisette would not let him go till my servant and I compelled her, for in her fury she would have flown at anyone else. She had become still more vicious ever since the Saxon hussar officer, of whom I have told you, had treacherously laid open her shoulder with a sabre-cut on the battlefield of Jena.

Such was the mare which I was riding at Eylau at the moment when the fragments of Augereau's army corps, shattered by a hail of musketry and cannon-balls, were trying to rally near the great cemetery. You will remember how the 14th of the line had remained alone on a hillock, which it could not quit except by the Emperor's order. The

snow had ceased for the moment; we could see how the intrepid regiment, surrounded by the enemy, was waving its eagle in the air to show that it still held its ground and asked for support. The Emperor, touched by the grand devotion of these brave men, resolved to try to save them, and ordered Augereau to send an officer to them with orders to leave the hillock, form a small square, and make their way towards us, while a brigade of cavalry should march in their direction and assist their efforts. This was before Murat's great charge. It was almost impossible to carry out the Emperor's wishes, because a swarm of Cossacks was between us and the 14th, and it was clear that any officer who was sent towards the unfortunate regiment would be killed or captured before he could get to it. But the order was positive, and the marshal had to comply.

It was customary in the Imperial army for the aides-de-camp to place themselves in file a few paces from their general, and for the one who was in front to go on duty first; then, when he had performed his mission, to return and place himself last, in order that each might carry orders in his turn, and dangers might be shared equally. A brave captain of engineers, named Froissard, who, though not an aide-de-camp, was on the marshal's staff, happened to be nearest to him, and was bidden to carry the order to the 14th. M. Froissard galloped off; we lost sight of him in the midst of the Cossacks, and never saw him again nor heard what had become of him. The marshal, seeing that the 14th did not move, sent an officer named David; he had the same fate as Froissard: we never heard of him again. Probably both were killed and stripped, and could not be recognised among the many corpses which covered the ground. For the third time the marshal called, 'The officer for duty.' It was my turn.

Seeing the son of his old friend, and I venture to say his favourite aide-de-camp, come up, the kind marshal's face changed, and his eyes filled with tears, for he could not hide from himself that he was sending me to almost certain death. But the Emperor must be obeyed. I was a soldier; it was impossible to make one of my comrades go in my place, nor would I have allowed it; it would have been disgracing me. So I dashed off. But though ready to sacrifice my life I felt bound to take all necessary precautions to save it. I had observed that the two officers who went before me had gone with swords drawn, which led me to think that they had purposed to defend themselves against any Cossacks who

might attack them on the way. Such defence, I thought, was ill-considered, since it must have compelled them to halt in order to fight a multitude of enemies, who would overwhelm them in the end. So I went otherwise to work, and leaving my sword in the scabbard, I regarded myself as a horseman who is trying to win a steeplechase, and goes as quickly as possible and by the shortest line towards the appointed goal, without troubling himself with what is to right or left of his path. Now, as my goal was the hillock occupied by the 14th, I resolved to get there without taking any notice of the Cossacks, whom in thought I abolished. This plan answered perfectly. Lisette, lighter than a swallow and flying rather than running, devoured the intervening space, leaping the piles of dead men and horses, the ditches, the broken gun-carriages, the half-extinguished bivouac fires. Thousands of Cossacks swarmed over the plain. The first who saw me acted like sportsmen who, when beating, start a hare, and announce its presence to each other by shouts of 'Your side! Your side!' but none of the Cossacks tried to stop me, first, on account of the extreme rapidity of my pace, and also probably because, their numbers being so great, each thought that I could not avoid his comrades farther on; so that I escaped them all, and reached the 14th regiment without either myself or my excellent mare having received the slightest scratch.

I found the 14th formed in square on the top of the hillock, but as the slope was very slight the enemy's cavalry had been able to deliver several charges. These had been vigorously repulsed, and the French regiment was surrounded by a circle of dead horses and dragoons, which formed a kind of rampart, making the position by this time almost inaccessible to cavalry; as I found, for in spite of the aid of our men, I had much difficulty in passing over this horrible entrenchment. At last I was in the square. Since Colonel Savary's death at the passage of the Wkra, the 14th had been commanded by a major. While I imparted to this officer, under a hail of balls, the order to quit his position and try to rejoin his corps, he pointed out to me that the enemy's artillery had been firing on the 14th for an hour, and had caused it such loss that the handful of soldiers which remained would inevitably be exterminated if they went down into the plain, and that, moreover, there would not be time to prepare to execute such a movement, since a Russian column was marching on him, and was not more than a hundred paces away. 'I see no means of saving the regiment,' said the major; 'return to the Emperor, bid him

farewell from the 14th of the line, which has faithfully executed his orders, and bear to him the eagle which he gave us, and which we can defend no longer: it would add too much to the pain of death to see it fall into the hands of the enemy.' Then the major handed me his eagle. Saluted for the last time by the glorious fragment of the intrepid regiment with cries of 'Vive l'Empereur!' they were going to die for him. It was the *Cæsar morituri te salutant* of Tacitus,[1] but in this case the cry was uttered by heroes. The infantry eagles were very heavy, and their weight was increased by a stout oak pole on the top of which they were fixed. The length of the pole embarrassed me much, and as the stick without the eagle could not constitute a trophy for the enemy, I resolved with the major's consent to break it and only carry off the eagle. But at the moment when I was leaning forward from my saddle in order to get a better purchase to separate the eagle from the pole, one of the numerous cannon-balls which the Russians were sending at us went through the hinder peak of my hat, less than an inch from my head. The shock was all the more terrible since my hat, being fastened on by a strong leather strap under the chin, offered more resistance to the blow. I seemed to be blotted out of existence, but I did not fall from my horse; blood flowed from my nose, my ears, and even my eyes; nevertheless I still could hear and see, and I preserved all my intellectual faculties, although my limbs were paralysed to such an extent that I could not move a single finger.

Meanwhile the column of Russian infantry which we had just perceived was mounting the hill; they were grenadiers wearing mitre-shaped caps with metal ornaments. Soaked with spirits, and in vastly superior numbers, these men hurled themselves furiously on the feeble remains of the unfortunate 14th, whose soldiers had for several days been living only on potatoes and melted snow; that day they had not had time to prepare even this wretched meal. Still our brave Frenchmen made a valiant defence with their bayonets, and when the square had been broken, they held together in groups and sustained the unequal fight for a long time.

During this terrible struggle several of our men, in order not to be struck from behind, set their backs against my mare's flanks, she, contrary to her practice, remaining perfectly quiet. If I had been able to move I should have urged her

[1] [As a matter of fact, Suetonius.]

forward to get away from this field of slaughter. But it was absolutely impossible for me to press my legs so as to make the animal I rode understand my wish. My position was the more frightful since, as I have said, I retained the power of sight and thought. Not only were they fighting all round me, which exposed me to bayonet-thrusts, but a Russian officer with a hideous countenance kept making efforts to run me through. As the crowd of combatants prevented him from reaching me, he pointed me out to the soldiers around him, and they, taking me for the commander of the French, as I was the only mounted man, kept firing at me over their comrades' heads, so that bullets were constantly whistling past my ear. One of them would certainly have taken away the small amount of life that was still in me had not a terrible incident led to my escape from the mêlée.

Among the Frenchmen who had got their flanks against my mare's near flank was a quartermaster-sergeant, whom I knew from having frequently seen him at the marshal's, making copies for him of the 'morning states.' This man, having been attacked and wounded by several of the enemy, fell under Lisette's belly, and was seizing my leg to pull himself up, when a Russian grenadier, too drunk to stand steady, wishing to finish him by a thrust in the breast, lost his balance, and the point of his bayonet went astray into my cloak, which at that moment was puffed out by the wind. Seeing that I did not fall, the Russian left the sergeant and aimed a great number of blows at me. These were at first fruitless, but one at last reached me, piercing my left arm, and I felt with a kind of horrible pleasure my blood flowing hot. The Russian grenadier with redoubled fury made another thrust at me, but, stumbling with the force which he put into it, drove his bayonet into my mare's thigh. Her ferocious instincts being restored by the pain, she sprang at the Russian, and at one mouthful tore off his nose, lips, eyebrows, and all the skin of his face, making of him a living death's-head, dripping with blood. Then hurling herself with fury among the combatants, kicking and biting, Lisette upset everything that she met on her road. The officer who had made so many attempts to strike me tried to hold her by the bridle; she seized him by his belly, and carrying him off with ease, she bore him out of the crush to the foot of the hillock, where, having torn out his entrails and mashed his body under her feet, she left him dying on the snow. Then, taking the road by which she had come, she made her way at full gallop towards the cemetery of Eylau. Thanks to

the hussar's saddle on which I was sitting I kept my seat. But a new danger awaited me. The snow had begun to fall again, and great flakes obscured the daylight when, having arrived close to Eylau, I found myself in front of a battalion of the Old Guard, who, unable to see clearly at a distance, took me for an enemy's officer leading a charge of cavalry. The whole battalion at once opened fire on me; my cloak and my saddle were riddled, but I was not wounded nor was my mare. She continued her rapid course, and went through the three ranks of the battalion as easily as a snake through a hedge. But this last spurt had exhausted Lisette's strength; she had lost much blood, for one of the large veins in her thigh had been divided, and the poor animal collapsed suddenly and fell on one side, rolling me over on the other.

Stretched on the snow among the piles of dead and dying, unable to move in any way, I gradually and without pain lost consciousness. I felt as if I was being gently rocked to sleep. At last I fainted quite away without being revived by the mighty clatter which Murat's ninety squadrons advancing to the charge must have made in passing close to me and perhaps over me. I judge that my swoon lasted four hours, and when I came to my senses I found myself in this horrible position. I was completely naked, having nothing on but my hat and my right boot. A man of the transport corps, thinking me dead, had stripped me in the usual fashion, and wishing to pull off the only boot that remained, was dragging me by one leg with his foot against my body. The jerks which the man gave me no doubt had restored me to my senses. I succeeded in sitting up and spitting out the clots of blood from my throat. The shock caused by the wind of the ball had produced such an extravasation of blood, that my face, shoulders, and chest were black, while the rest of my body was stained red by the blood from my wound. My hat and my hair were full of bloodstained snow, and as I rolled my haggard eyes I must have been horrible to see. Anyhow, the transport man looked the other way, and went off with my property without my being able to say a single word to him, so utterly prostrate was I. But I had recovered my mental faculties, and my thoughts turned towards God and my mother.

The setting sun cast some feeble rays through the clouds. I took what I believed to be a last farewell of it. 'If,' thought I, 'I had only not been stripped, some one of the numerous people who pass near me would notice the gold lace on my pelisse, and, recognising that I am a marshal's aide-de-camp,

would perhaps have carried me to the ambulance. But seeing me naked, they do not distinguish me from the corpses with which I am surrounded, and, indeed, there soon will be no difference between them and me. I cannot call help, and the approaching night will take away all hope of succour. The cold is increasing: shall I be able to bear it till to-morrow, seeing that I feel my naked limbs stiffening already?' So I made up my mind to die, for if I had been saved by a miracle in the midst of the terrible mêlée between the Russians and the 14th, could I expect that there would be a second miracle to extract me from my present horrible position? The second miracle did take place in the following manner. Marshal Augereau had a valet named Pierre Dannel, a very intelligent and very faithful fellow, but somewhat given to arguing. Now it happened during our stay at La Houssaye that Dannel, having answered his master, got dismissed. In despair, he begged me to plead for him. This I did so zealously that I succeeded in getting him taken back into favour. From that time the valet had been devotedly attached to me. The outfit having been all left behind at Landsberg, he had started all out of his own head on the day of battle to bring provisions to his master. He had placed these in a very light wagon which could go everywhere, and contained the articles which the marshal most frequently required. This little wagon was driven by a soldier belonging to the same company of the transport corps as the man who had just stripped me. This latter, with my property in his hands, passed near the wagon, which was standing at the side of the cemetery, and, recognising the driver, his old comrade, he hailed him, and showed him the splendid booty which he had just taken from a dead man.

Now you must know that when we were in cantonments on the Vistula the marshal happened to send Dannel to Warsaw for provisions, and I commissioned him to get the trimming of black astrachan taken from my pelisse, and have it replaced by grey, this having recently been adopted by Prince Berthier's aides-de-camp, who set the fashion in the army. Up to now, I was the only one of Augereau's officers who had grey astrachan. Dannel, who was present when the transport man made his display, quickly recognised my pelisse, which made him look more closely at the other effects of the alleged dead man. Among these he found my watch, which had belonged to my father and was marked with his cypher. The valet had no longer any doubt that I had been killed, and while deploring my loss, he wished to see me for the last

time. Guided by the transport man he reached me and found me living. Great was the joy of this worthy man, to whom I certainly owed my life. He made haste to fetch my servant and some orderlies, and had me carried to a barn, where he rubbed my body with rum. Meanwhile some one went to fetch Dr. Raymond, who came at length, dressed the wound in my arm, and declared that the release of blood due to it would be the saving of me.

My brother and my comrades were quickly round me; something was given to the transport soldier who had taken my clothes, which he returned very willingly, but as they were saturated with water and with blood, Marshal Augereau had me wrapped in things belonging to himself. The Emperor had given the marshal leave to go to Landsberg, but as his wound forbad him to ride, his aides-de-camp had procured a sledge, on which the body of a carriage had been placed. The marshal, who could not make up his mind to leave me, had me fastened up beside him, for I was too weak to sit upright.

Before I was removed from the field of battle I had seen my poor Lisette near me. The cold had caused the blood from her wound to clot, and prevented the loss from being too great. The creature had got on to her legs and was eating the straw which the soldiers had used the night before for their bivouacs. My servant, who was very fond of Lisette, had noticed her when he was helping to remove me, and cutting up into bandages the shirt and hood of a dead soldier, he wrapped her leg with them, and thus made her able to walk to Landsberg. The officer in command of the small garrison there had had the forethought to get quarters ready for the wounded, so the staff found places in a large and good inn.

In this way, instead of passing the night without help, stretched naked on the snow, I lay on a good bed surrounded by the attention of my brother, my comrades, and the kind Dr. Raymond. The doctor had been obliged to cut off the boot which the transport man had not been able to pull off, and which had become all the more difficult to remove owing to the swelling of my foot. You will see presently that this very nearly cost me my leg, and perhaps my life.

We stayed thirty-six hours at Landsberg. This rest, and the good care taken of me, restored me to the use of speech and senses, and when on the second day after the battle Marshal Augereau started for Warsaw I was able to be carried in the

sledge. The journey lasted eight days. Gradually I recovered strength, but as strength returned I began to feel a sensation of icy cold in my right foot. At Warsaw I was lodged in the house that had been taken for the marshal, which suited me the better that I was not able to leave my bed. Yet the wound in my arm was doing well, the extravasated blood was becoming absorbed, my skin was recovering its natural colour. The doctor knew not to what he could ascribe my inability to rise, till, hearing me complaining of my leg, he examined it, and found that my foot was gangrened. An accident of my early days was the cause of this new trouble. At Sorèze I had my right foot wounded by the unbuttoned foil of a schoolfellow with whom I was fencing. It seemed that the muscles of the part had become sensitive, and had suffered much from cold while I was lying unconscious on the field of Eylau; thence had resulted a swelling which explained the difficulty experienced by the soldier in dragging off my right boot. The foot was frost-bitten, and as it had not been treated in time, gangrene had appeared in the site of the old wound from the foil. The place was covered with an eschar as large as a five-franc piece. The doctor turned pale when he saw the foot: then, making four servants hold me, and taking his knife, he lifted the eschar, and dug the mortified flesh from my foot just as one cuts the damaged part out of an apple. The pain was great, but I did not complain. It was otherwise, however, when the knife reached the living flesh, and laid bare the muscles and bones till one could see them moving. Then the doctor, standing on a chair, soaked a sponge in hot sweetened wine, and let it fall drop by drop into the hole which he had just dug in my foot. The pain became unbearable. Still, for eight days I had to undergo this torture morning and evening, but my leg was saved.

Nowadays, when promotions and decorations are bestowed so lavishly, some reward would certainly be given to an officer who had braved danger as I had done in reaching the 14th regiment; but under the Empire a devoted act of that kind was thought so natural that I did not receive the cross, nor did it ever occur to me to ask for it. A long rest having been ordered for the cure of Marshal Augereau's wound, the Emperor wrote to bid him return for treatment to France, and sent to Italy for Masséna, to whom my brother, Bro, and several of my comrades were attached. Augereau took me with him, as well as Dr. Raymond and his secretary. I had to be lifted in and out of the carriage; otherwise I found my health coming back

as I got away from those icy regions towards a milder climate. My mare passed the winter in the stables of M. de Launay, head of the forage department. Our road lay through Silesia. So long as we were in that horrible Poland, it required twelve, sometimes sixteen, horses to draw the carriage at a walk through the bogs and quagmires; but in Germany we found at length civilisation and real roads.

After a halt at Dresden, and ten or twelve days' stay at Frankfort, we reached Paris about March 15. I walked very lame, wore my arm in a sling, and still felt the terrible shaking caused by the wind of the cannon-ball; but the joy of seeing my mother again, and her kind care of me, together with the sweet influences of the spring, completed my cure. Before leaving Warsaw I had meant to throw away the hat which the ball had pierced, but the marshal kept it as a curiosity and gave it to my mother. It still exists in my possession, and should be kept as a family relic.

CHAPTER XXX.

At Paris I remained the rest of March, all April, and the first week of May. It was during this stay that I made the acquaintance of the Desbrières family, with whom I was shortly to become connected. As soon as my health was restored, I felt that I could not stay longer at Paris. Marshal Augereau recommended me to Marshal Lannes, who received me very cordially on his staff. In order to be in a position to watch the enemy's movements during the winter, the Emperor had taken up his quarters in the midst of the cantonments of the troops, first at Osterode, then at the château of Finkenstein, whence, while making ready for a new campaign, he governed France and gave instructions to his ministers, receiving their reports every week. The portfolios containing the various papers from each minister were sent every Wednesday evening to M. Denniée, under-secretary of state for war, who sent them off every Thursday morning. The duty of conveying them to the Emperor was entrusted to a clerk, but the service was badly performed, since the majority of the clerks had never been out of France, could not speak a word of German, and knew neither the money nor the postal regulations of foreign countries, so that the moment they had crossed the Rhine they were quite helpless. Besides, these gentlemen, not being accustomed to fatigue, very soon broke down under a journey of more than 300 leagues, requiring continuous travelling ten days and nights. One of them was even careless enough to let his despatches be stolen.

Furious at this mischance, Napoleon sent a mounted messenger to Paris ordering M. Denniée to entrust the portfolios in future only to officers who knew German, and who were enough accustomed to roughing it to be able to fulfil the mission more efficiently. M. Denniée was at a loss to find one when I presented myself with Marshal Lannes' letter summoning me to join him. Delighted at seeing a way of quickly getting off his portfolios with safety, he bade me get ready by the following Thursday, and gave me 5,000 francs for posting

expenses and the purchase of a carriage. This suited me very well, as I had very little money with which to rejoin the army at the other end of Poland.

We left Paris about May 10; my servant and I were well armed, and whenever one of us was compelled to leave the carriage for a moment the other kept guard. We knew enough German to hurry along the postilions, who were far more amenable to an officer in uniform than to the clerks. Thus, instead of requiring, like those gentlemen, nine days and a half, or, perhaps, ten days to get from Paris to Finkenstein, I did the journey in eight days and a half.

The Emperor, delighted at getting his despatches twenty-four hours quicker, began by praising my zeal which had induced me to return to the army in spite of my recent wounds, and added that, as I was such a good postman, I was to start back that same night for Paris and bring back some more portfolios. This would not hinder me from being present when hostilities recommenced, which could not be until the beginning of June.

Although I had not by a long way spent the 5,000 francs which M. Denniée had handed me, the marshal of the Palace gave me the same amount for my return journey. I went back to Paris at full speed, remained twenty-four hours there, and started back for Poland. The minister of war handed me another 5,000 francs for the third journey; it was a good deal more than was necessary, but such were the Emperor's orders. It is true that the journeys were very tiring, and still more tedious, although the weather was very fine. I was on wheels day and night for nearly a month, with my servant as my sole companion. I found the Emperor again at the château of Finkenstein. I was afraid that just when fighting was going to begin I should have to go on acting postman; but luckily officers had been found to carry the despatches, and the service was already organised. The Emperor gave me leave to rejoin Marshal Lannes, which I did at Marienburg on May 25. Colonel Sicard, Augereau's aide-de-camp, was with him, and had been kind enough to bring my horses. It was a great pleasure to see again my dear mare Lisette, who was still capable of doing good service.

The fortress of Dantzig, which the French had besieged during the winter, had fallen into their hands. The return of the summer soon caused the campaign to be reopened. The Russians beat up our cantonments on June 5, and were smartly repulsed at all points. At Heilsberg on the 10th there was an

engagement sanguinary enough to have been dignified by some historians into a battle, the enemy being again beaten. I shall not give any details of this affair, because Marshal Lannes' corps only came up at nightfall and took very little part in it. We received, however, a pretty good number of shot, one of which inflicted a mortal wound on Colonel Sicard, who had been struck by a bullet at Eylau, and was hardly cured when he came back to fight afresh. Before dying he bade me take farewell of Augereau for him, and gave me a letter for his wife. It was a sad scene and distressed me much.

In our pursuit of the Russians we passed by Eylau. Three months before we had left the fields covered with snow and corpses, now they presented a lovely carpet of green, studded with flowers. What a contrast! How many brave fighting men were resting under those green meadows! I went and sat down at the very place where I had fallen, where I had been stripped, where I must have died if a combination of really providential events had not saved me. Marshal Lannes wanted to see the hillock where the 14th had made such a gallant defence, and I took him there. The enemy had occupied this ground since the battle, but in spite of this we found no damage done to the monument which all the regiments of the French army had put up to their ill-fated comrades of the 14th, thirty-six of whose officers had been buried in the same trench. This respect for the fame of the dead does honour to the Russians. I halted for a few moments on the place where I had received the cannon-ball in my hat and the bayonet-wound, and thought of the brave men who lay beneath in the dust and whose fate I had gone so near to sharing.

After their defeat at Heilsberg on the 10th of June, the Russians made a headlong retreat and gained a day's march on the French, who, on the evening of the 13th, were assembled in advance of Eylau on the left bank of the Alle. The enemy occupied Bartenstein on the right bank, and the two forces descended the river, marching parallel with each other. Bennigsen, having his base of supplies at Königsberg, where the Prussian army was, planned to reach that town before the French army could come up; but to do this, he had to cross to the left bank of the Alle, along which Napoleon was marching from Eylau. The Russian general hoped to reach Friedland sufficiently in advance to be able to cross the river unopposed. But the same motives which made Bennigsen wish to keep Königsberg made it to the Emperor's interest to capture it, and

for some days he had been manœuvring to outflank the enemy's left, in order to draw them away from the place; while he had detached Soult, Murat, and Davout towards it, in order to meet the Russians if they got there first. But he was not satisfied with this precaution. Foreseeing that in order to reach Königsberg the Russians would seek to cross the Alle at Friedland, he determined to occupy that town before them. In the night between June 13 and 14 he sent forward the corps of Marshals Lannes and Mortier, with three divisions of cavalry. The rest of the army was to follow. Lannes, who, with Oudinot's grenadiers and a brigade of cavalry, formed the advance, reached Posthenen, one league short of Friedland, at 2 A.M., and sent the 9th Hussars to reconnoitre the latter town. They were driven back with loss, and the rising sun enabled us to see a large part of the Russian army massed on the other side of the river, on the high table-land between Allenau and Friedland. The enemy was beginning to cross the old bridge of the town, close to which he had constructed two new ones.

The aim which each side had in view was easy to understand. The Russians wished to cross the Alle and reach Königsberg; the French wished to hinder them, and roll them back from the other side of the river, the banks of which are very steep. There is no bridge save that at Friedland. The difficulty which the Russians had in debouching from the town into the plain on the left bank was increased by the fact that the issue from Friedland is narrowed at that spot by a largish lake, as well as by a stream called the Millstream, which runs in a deep and narrow ravine. To cover his passage, the enemy had thrown up two powerful batteries on the right bank, commanding the town, and part of the plain between Posthenen and Heinrichsdorf. The objects and respective positions of the two armies being thus made clear, I will briefly set out the chief incidents of this decisive battle, which led to a peace.

The Emperor was still at Eylau. The various army corps were marching on Friedland, from which they were several leagues distant, when Lannes, who had marched all night, arrived before the town. If the marshal had only listened to his own eagerness he would have attacked the enemy on the spot, but they had already 30,000 men in position on the plain in front of Friedland, and their lines, the right of which was in front of Heinrichsdorf, the centre on the Millstream, and the left on the village of Sortlack, were being continually

strengthened, while Lannes had only 10,000 men. These, however, he placed very skilfully in the village of Posthenen, and in the wood of Sortlack, whence he threatened the Russian left, while, with two divisions of cavalry, he tried to stop their march on Heinrichsdorf, a village on the road from Friedland to Königsberg. A brisk fire was opened, but Marshal Mortier's corps appeared without delay, and in order to dispute the way to Königsberg with the Russians, while he waited for reinforcements, he occupied Heinrichsdorf and the space between that village and Posthenen. Still, it was not possible that Mortier and Lannes could, with 25,000 men, make head against the 70,000 Russians who would shortly face them. The moment was becoming very critical. Marshal Lannes was sending officers every instant to warn the Emperor to hurry up the army corps which he knew were on the march behind him. I was the first sent, and, mounted on my swift Lisette, I met the Emperor leaving Eylau and found him beaming. He made me come to his side, and as we galloped I had to give him an account of all that had taken place before I had left the field of battle. When I had ended my report the Emperor said smiling, 'Have you a good memory?' 'Pretty fair, sir.' 'Well, what anniversary is it to-day, 14th June?' 'Marengo.' 'Yes,' replied the Emperor, 'that of Marengo; and I am going to beat the Russians as I beat the Austrians.' So convinced was Napoleon on this point that as he rode along the columns, and while the soldiers saluted him with frequent cheers, he repeatedly said to them, 'To-day is a lucky day, the anniversary of Marengo.'

CHAPTER XXXI.

It was past eleven when the Emperor arrived on the field of battle, where several army corps had already joined Lannes and Mortier. The rest, with the guard, came up in due course. Napoleon rectified the lines. Ney commanded the right wing, which was placed in the woods of Sortlack, Lannes and Mortier the centre, between Posthenen and Heinrichsdorf, the left extended beyond the last-named village. It was oppressively hot; the Emperor allowed the troops an hour's rest, and settled that at a signal given by twenty-five guns firing simultaneously, a general attack should be made. Marshal Ney's corps had the roughest task. Concealed in the wood of Sortlack, it had to issue from it and make its way into Friedland, where the enemy's main force and reserves were massed, capture the bridges, and thus cut off the Russians' retreat entirely. It is difficult to understand how Bennigsen could have made up his mind to place his army in advance of the Friedland defile, where it had in rear the Alle, with its steep banks, and before it the French, who held the plain. To account for his action, the Russian general explained later on that, being a day's march ahead of Napoleon, and not being able to conceive that the French could cover in twelve hours a distance equal to that which his troops had taken twenty-four hours to traverse, he had supposed, when he found Lannes' corps at Friedland, that it was an isolated advanced guard of the French army, which he would have no difficulty in crushing, and that, when he discovered his error, it was too late to bring his army back to the other side of the Alle, because the Friedland defile would have caused him a certain loss, so that he preferred to fight with vigour.

About 1 P.M. the twenty-five cannons at Posthenen fired simultaneously by the Emperor's order, and battle was joined all along the line. Our left and our centre advanced at first very slowly, in order to give the right, under Ney, time to carry the town. The marshal, issuing from the wood at Sortlack, captured the village of that name and advanced very

quickly on Friedland, clearing everything on his road. But in the passing from the wood and village of Sortlack to the first houses of Friedland, the troops had to march without cover, and found themselves exposed to a terrible fire from the Russian batteries, which, being placed in rear of the town on the high ground of the opposite bank, caused them immense loss. What made the fire more dangerous was that the enemy's gunners, having the river between us and them, could aim in security, since they saw that it was impossible for our infantry to attack them. This serious disadvantage might have prevented the capture of Friedland, but Napoleon remedied it by sending fifty guns, which were placed by General Sénarmont, and fired across the river at the Russian batteries, pouring upon them such a hail of shot as must soon have dismounted them. As soon as the fire of the enemy's guns was silenced, Ney continued his bold march, rolled back the Russians in Friedland, and entered pell-mell with them into the streets of the unlucky town, which the shells had already set on fire. There was a terrible bayonet fight, and the Russians, crowded one upon another and hardly able to move, lost very heavily. Ultimately they were obliged, in spite of their courage, to retire in disorder, and seek a refuge on the opposite bank, crossing the bridges again. But here a new danger awaited them. General Sénarmont's artillery, having drawn near the town, took the bridges in flank, and soon broke them, after killing a great number of the Russians who were crossing them in their hurried flight. All who still remained in Friedland were captured, killed, or drowned in crossing the river.

Up to this time Napoleon had, so to say, made his centre and left wing mark time. Now he pushed them rapidly forward. The Russian general, Gortschakoff, who commanded the enemy's centre and right wing, obeying merely his own courage, wished to recapture the town. This would have been of no use to him, since the bridges were broken, but that he did not know. So he dashed forwards at the head of his troops into Friedland, blazing as it was. But repulsed in front by Ney's troops, who occupied the town, and compelled to regain the open country, the enemy's general soon found himself surrounded by our centre, which pushed him back on the Alle, in front of Kloschenen. The Russians defended themselves with furious heroism, and though driven in on all sides refused to surrender. A large part fell under our bayonets, and the rest were rolled back from the top of the bank into the river, where nearly all were drowned.

The enemy's extreme right, consisting chiefly of cavalry, had attempted to carry or turn the village of Heinrichsdorf. But repulsed briskly by our troops, it had regained the banks of the Alle, under command of General Lambert. Seeing Friedland occupied by the French, and the Russian left and centre destroyed, he rallied as many regiments as he could of the right wing, and escaped from the field of battle by descending the Alle. Night prevented the French from pursuing,[1] so that of all the enemy's corps this alone escaped utter rout. Our victory was most complete; all the Russian artillery fell into our hands. We had taken few prisoners during the action, but the numbers of the enemy killed and wounded amounted to more than 26,000. Our loss was only 3,000 killed, and 4,000 to 5,000 wounded. Of all the battles fought by the Emperor, this was the *only one*[2] in which his troops outnumbered those of the enemy. The French had 80,000 combatants, the Russians only 75,000. The remains of the enemy's army marched in disorder all night, and retired behind the Pregel, destroying the bridges.

Marshals Soult, Davout, and Murat had not been able to take part in the battle, but their appearance had decided the Prussians to abandon Königsberg, and our troops took possession of it, finding there immense stores of all kinds.

No accident befell me during the battle of Friedland, although I was exposed to very great dangers on this wise. You saw me starting in the morning from Posthenen by order of Marshal Lannes to go at full speed and warn the Emperor that the enemy was crossing the Alle at Friedland, and a battle appeared imminent. Napoleon was at Eylau, and I had, therefore, nearly six leagues to go in order to meet him, which would have been a small matter for my excellent mare if the roads had been clear. But encumbered as they were by the troops of the various corps coming up with all haste to support Marshal Lannes, I found it absolutely impossible to gallop if I kept the road, so I went across country, with the result that Lisette, having had to jump fences, hedges, and ditches, was pretty well blown when I joined the Emperor, coming out of Eylau. But I had, without taking a moment's rest, to return with him to Friedland, and although this time the troops drew up to let

[1] [June 14. Latitude 53°.]

[2] [The italics are the author's. Napoleon's bulletins after the battles no doubt usually contained a statement to a similar effect, but subsequent investigation tends to show that the statement was not always strictly correct.]

us pass, my poor mare, who had galloped twelve leagues at a stretch, six of them across country, and on a very hot day, was completely beaten when I reached the field of battle and rejoined Marshal Lannes. I saw that Lisette could do no more service during the action, so I took advantage of the moment's rest which the Emperor allowed the troops to try to find my servant and change horses. But in the midst of an army of that size how was I to find my belongings? It was impossible, so I returned to the staff, still mounted on the blown Lisette.

Marshal Lannes and my comrades, seeing the fix I was in, advised me to dismount, and let my mare rest for a few hours. At that moment I saw one of our hussars leading a horse which he had captured. I bought it, and entrusting Lisette to a trooper of the marshal's escort to take her to the rear and feed her, and hand her over to my servant whenever he saw him, I mounted my new horse, resumed my place among the aides-de-camp, and took my turns of duty. At first I was well satisfied with my mount, until Lannes sent me off to Ney, who was by that time in Friedland, to warn him of a movement which the enemy was making. Hardly was I in the town when my devil of a horse, who had behaved so well in the open country, finding himself in a little square with houses on fire all round, the pavements covered with burning furniture and timber, and many half-roasted corpses, was so terrified by the sight of the flames and the odour of burning flesh, that he refused to advance or retreat. Putting his four feet together, he stood stock still and snorted violently, without taking the slightest notice of the spur, which I vigorously applied. Meanwhile the Russians, having gained a momentary advantage in a street close by, were pushing our troops back to the place where I was, and were pouring a hail of bullets from a church tower and the neighbouring houses all about me, at the same time plying the battalions by whom I was surrounded with grape from two guns which they had dragged up. Many men fell all round me, and I was reminded of the position in which I had found myself at Eylau. As I had no curiosity whatever to see what another wound felt like, and besides, so long as I stayed there I could not fulfil my errand, I just got off, and leaving my infernal horse, slipped along the houses to go and join Ney, who was in another square which the officers pointed out to me. I remained a quarter of an hour with him : plenty of bullets were dropping there, but nothing like so many as in the place where I had left

my horse. Finally, a bayonet charge drove back the Russians, and compelled them to retire on all sides towards the bridges. Ney bade me take the good news to Lannes. I returned by the same way which I had taken in coming, and passed again the spot where I had left my horse. It had been the scene of a sanguinary fight; nothing was to be seen but dead and dying, and in the middle of them was the obstinate horse, his back broken by a cannon-ball, and his body riddled with bullets.

I hurried on to the end of the suburbs, for burning houses were falling down on all sides, and I feared to be buried in the ruins. At last I got out of the town, and reached the edge of the lake. The heat of the day, combined with that of the fire in the streets which I had passed through, had made me steam. I was half-suffocated and dropping with fatigue and hard work; for I had passed the night on horseback coming from Eylau to Friedland; then I had galloped again to Eylau and back, and had eaten nothing since the previous day. I did not therefore enjoy the prospect of having to cross on foot under a burning sun and through tall corn the immense plain which lay between me and Posthenen, where I had left Marshal Lannes; but fortune stood my friend. Grouchy's division of dragoons, which had been briskly engaged with the enemy close by, though victorious, had lost a certain number of men, and the colonels had as usual ordered the horses of the killed to be collected and led by a detachment at a distance from the rest. I caught sight of this picket, every man of which was leading four or five horses, as it was making for the lake to water them. I spoke to the officer, who, finding so many led horses in the way, was only too glad to let me take one, which I promised to send back to the regiment in the evening. He even selected for me an excellent animal which had been ridden by a sergeant killed in the charge. I mounted, and returned quickly towards Posthenen. Hardly had I left the shore of the lake, when it became the scene of a most bloody fight, owing to the desperate attack made by General Gortschakoff in order to effect his retreat by the Friedland road, of which Marshal Ney was in occupation.

Caught between that marshal's troops and those of our advancing centre, Gortschakoff's Russians made a stout defence in the houses near the lake. If, therefore, I had, as I at first intended, stayed to rest a few moments in that spot, I should have found myself in the thick of a terrible mêlée. I rejoined Lannes just as he was starting to attack Gortschakoff's force

in rear, while Ney from the town was repulsing it in front, and I was therefore able to give him some useful information as to the configuration of the ground on which we were fighting. If the French army had made few prisoners on the battlefield of Friedland, it was not so on the morrow and the following days, for the Russians, driven at the sword's point in an utter rout, fell out from their ranks and slept, wearied out, in the fields, where we captured a great number. We also gathered up a good deal of artillery. All of Bennigsen's army that could escape made haste to recross the Niemen, behind which the Emperor of Russia had remained. Remembering probably the dangers to which he had been exposed at Austerlitz, he had not thought it advisable to be present in person at the battle of Friedland, and lost no time, two days after our victory, in asking and obtaining an armistice.

Three days after the memorable battle of Friedland the French army came in sight of the town of Tilsit and the Niemen, which at this point is only a few leagues distant from the Russian frontier. After a battle it is all pain and grief in the rear of a victorious army, whose march is marked out by dead, dying, and wounded, while the surviving warriors, soon forgetting their fallen comrades, are rejoicing in their success and gaily marching on to new adventures. Great was the joy of our soldiers at seeing the Niemen, whose opposite bank was occupied by the remains of that Russian army which they had so often met and beaten. Our troops sang, while a gloomy silence reigned in the enemy's camp. The Emperor took up his quarters at Tilsit, while the troops encamped round the town. The Niemen lay between the two armies, the French being on the left bank, the Russians on the right. The Emperor Alexander requested an interview with Napoleon, and it took place on June 25 in a pavilion set up on a raft, which was anchored in mid-stream, in full view of the two armies. It was a most imposing spectacle. The two Emperors arrived from each side attended by five of the principal personages of their army. Marshal Lannes, who had flattered himself that he had this claim to accompany the Emperor, saw Marshal Bessières, Murat's intimate friend, preferred to him, and never forgave those marshals for what he considered an unfair piece of favour.

So Marshal Lannes stayed with us on the quay at Tilsit, whence we saw the two Emperors meet and embrace amid loud cheers from both camps. Next day at another interview in the same pavilion the Emperor of Russia presented to Napoleon

his unfortunate friend, the King of Prussia. This prince, who through the chances of war had lost a vast kingdom, of which only the little town of Memel and a few poor villages remained to him, preserved an attitude worthy of the descendant of the great Frederick. Napoleon received him politely but coldly, because he thought he had reason to complain of him. Besides, he was planning the confiscation of a large part of his state.

In order to facilitate the intercourse of the two Emperors the town of Tilsit was declared neutral, and Napoleon ceded half of it to the Emperor of Russia, who took up his quarters there with his guard. The two sovereigns passed some twenty days together, during which they arranged the destiny of Europe. The King of Prussia meanwhile was relegated to the right bank, and was not even lodged in Tilsit, only coming there very rarely. One day Napoleon went to call on the unfortunate Queen of Prussia, who was said to be in great grief. He invited her to dinner on the following day, which she accepted, doubtless much against the grain. But at the moment of concluding peace, it was very necessary to appease the victor. Napoleon and the Queen of Prussia hated each other cordially. She had insulted him in many proclamations, and he had given it her back in his bulletins. Yet their interview showed no traces of their mutual hatred. Napoleon was respectful and attentive, the Queen gracious and disposed to captivate her former enemy. She had all the more need to do so, being well aware that the treaty of peace created under the title of Kingdom of Westphalia a new state, whose territory was to be contributed by electoral Hesse and Prussia.

The Queen could resign herself to the loss of several provinces, but she could not make up her mind to part with the strong place of Magdeburg, the retaining of which would be Prussia's safeguard. On his side, Napoleon, who proposed to make his brother Jerome King of Westphalia, wished to add Magdeburg to the new state. It is said that in order to retain this important town, the Queen of Prussia, during dinner, used all the methods of friendliness until Napoleon, to change the conversation, praised a superb rose that the Queen was wearing. The story goes that she said, 'Will your Majesty have this rose in exchange for Magdeburg?' Perhaps it would have been chivalrous to accept, but the Emperor was too practical a man to let himself be caught by a pretty offer, and it is averred that while praising the beauty of the rose and of the hand which offered it, he did not take

the flower. The Queen's eyes filled with tears, but the victor affected not to perceive it. He kept Magdeburg and escorted the Queen politely to the boat which was to take her across to the other side.

During our stay at Tilsit, Napoleon reviewed his guard and his army in presence of Alexander, who was struck by the martial air and bearing of the troops. The Emperor of Russia showed in his turn some fine battalions of his guards, but the number of his troops of the line had been so reduced at Heilsberg and Friedland that he did not dare to display them. As for the King of Prussia, who only had some weak fragments of regiments remaining, he did not bring them out.

Napoleon concluded with Russia and Prussia a treaty of peace, in which the principal articles were, that a kingdom of Westphalia was created for the benefit of Jerome Bonaparte, and the Elector of Saxony, who had become the ally and friend of France, was raised to the rank of King, receiving in addition the grand duchy of Warsaw, consisting of a large province of the old Poland which was taken back from the Prussians. I omit the less important articles of the treaty, but its result was to restore peace between the Great Powers of the Continent.

In placing his brother Jerome on the throne of Westphalia, Napoleon added to the mistakes which he had already made when he gave the kingdom of Naples to Joseph, and that of Holland to Louis. The people felt themselves humiliated by being compelled to obey strangers, who, so far from having done anything great themselves, were utter nullities, whose only merit was being Napoleon's brothers. The hatred and contempt which these new kings brought on themselves contributed very largely to the fall of the Emperor. The King of Westphalia was especially that one whose goings on made most enemies for Napoleon. Peace being concluded, the two Emperors parted with mutual assurances of attachment, which at that time appeared sincere.

CHAPTER XXXII.

I PASSED the autumn and winter with my mother at Paris, and took part in the numerous entertainments which were given, the finest being the reception given by the city to the imperial guard on their return. Thus ended the year 1807, in which I had incurred so many dangers and led so chequered a life. I little thought that in the course of the year which was now beginning I should again be face to face with death.

In the course of January, Napoleon at length replied to the King of Spain, but in an evasive fashion, for, without positively refusing to give the hand of one of his nieces to the Prince of the Asturias, he put off the date of the marriage indefinitely. The alarm of the court of Madrid at the receipt of this answer was increased by hearing that more French troops were on the march towards Catalonia and Aragon, which, with the army in Portugal, would raise the Emperor's forces in the Peninsula to 125,000 men. Finally, Napoleon in great part lifted the veil under which his plans had been hidden. Under the pretext of sending troops on board the French fleet stationed at Cadiz, he caused a powerful army corps to advance in February towards Madrid, through which the road from Bayonne to Cadiz passes, and named Prince Murat generalissimo of all the French forces in Spain.

I had now been in Paris more than six months, and although Marshal Augereau, to whom I was still aide-de-camp, was far from anticipating the war which was about to break out in the Peninsula, he thought it neither right nor conducive to my advance in my profession that I should stay at Paris when a large army was assembled beyond the Pyrenees. Being himself still kept in France by the effects of his wound, he took me to Prince Murat to ask him to attach me provisionally to his staff. I have already said that my father, who belonged to the same part of the country as Murat, had done him many kindnesses. Murat, who had always shown himself grateful, consented very readily to take me until such time as Augereau should have a command. I was well

satisfied with this decision, although the position of a supernumerary officer has its inconveniences, but I was anxious to show zeal, I reckoned on the Emperor's goodwill, and, further, I was glad to go back to Spain and witness the great events which were in progress there. Considerable expense was necessary to make a fitting appearance on the staff of Murat, which at that time was the most brilliant in the army, but this was made easy to me by what was left of my splendid travelling allowances during and after the Friedland campaign. So I bought three good horses, with which my servant, Woirland, was to await me at Bayonne, whither I went when I had got my new uniforms.

This was the third time that a change of employment had taken me to Bayonne. Prince Murat and his staff received me most kindly, and I was soon on the best of terms with them all, though I steadily refused, in spite of continual pressure, to take part in their play. These gentlemen had cards or dice in their hands all day, winning or losing thousands of francs with the most perfect calm ; but besides that I have always detested play, I knew that I must keep what I had in order to renew my outfit in case of accidents, and that it was dishonourable to risk what I perhaps could not pay.

Part of the troops which Murat was to command were, perhaps, already in Castile. He entered Spain on March 10, and in five days we were at Burgos. From this time Murat regulated his march on that of the columns, and passed in succession to Valladolid in Segovia. The Spaniards, always flattering themselves that the French had come to protect the Prince of the Asturias, received our troops very well, though again astonished by their extreme youth and want of robustness, for, under some incomprehensible delusion, Napoleon had persisted in sending into the Peninsula none but newly-raised regiments.

We occupied in Spain none but open towns, and two fortified places only, Barcelona and Pampeluna. But as their citadels and forts were still in the hands of the Spanish troops, the Emperor ordered his generals to try to get possession of them. To this end a thoroughly base trick was employed. The Spanish Government, while forbidding its generals to let us occupy the citadels and the forts, had ordered that the French troops should be received as friends, and everything done for their comfort. The commanders of our regiments asked permission to place their sick and their stores in the citadels, which was granted. Then they disguised their

grenadiers as sick, and hid arms in the provision sacks of several companies, who, under pretext of going to the store houses for bread, made their way into the place and disarmed the Spaniards. In this way, General Duhesme, with only 5,000 men, got possession of the citadel of Barcelona and of Fort Monjuich. The citadel of Pampeluna and nearly all those in Catalonia shared the same fate.

[The Queen and the Prince of the Peace were at Aranjuez, persisting in their intention of retiring to America if matters got worse. Ferdinand, however, still hoping to obtain the hand of Napoleon's niece, saw in us only liberators, and with the support of many of the Royal Family and of the ministers, refused to follow the Queen and Godoy. At the sight of the preparations for a journey, the population and garrison of Aranjuez understood the facts and their indignation spread to Madrid. Nevertheless, the King was on the point of starting on the morning of March 16. But the people, with the support of the troops, rose and opposed his departure. Charles submitted, and a proclamation, stating that he would not go, quieted the crowd. But in the course of the night their numbers were swelled by the garrison and part of the population of Madrid, as well as peasants from the neighbourhood. Godoy's house was broken into and sacked, his guard of hussars dispersed by the King's body-guard, and the crowd went in search of the favourite himself. In order to save his life, the ministers persuaded the King to sign a decree degrading the Prince of the Peace from all his titles and dignities. At the news the crowd broke out into wild rejoicings, in which Ferdinand had the bad taste to take part.

All this time Godoy was actually concealed in his own palace, rolled up in some matting in a loft. The place had been searched, but he had not been discovered. He passed forty-eight hours in this position, and only came out when constrained by hunger. Then, however, he was promptly arrested by a sentry and handed over to the populace. He had received several wounds, when a picket of the body-guard, less cruel than the majority of their comrades, tore him from the hands of his tormentors, and got him away into the very same barrack where, twenty years before, he had been himself admitted as a soldier in the body-guard.]

On learning the arrest of their favourite, the King and Queen, in fear for his life, appealed to the generosity of the Prince of the Asturias and implored him to use his influence to release Godoy from the hands of the insurgents. Ferdinand

arrived at the barracks just at the moment when the crowd was breaking in the gates. On his promise that Godoy should be brought to trial the mob retired respectfully. The prisoner was courageously awaiting his death when he saw the heir to the throne enter the stable where he was lying in his blood. At the sight of his personal foe he recovered all his energy, and when Ferdinand said to him with a generosity whether genuine or feigned, 'I pardon you,' Godoy replied with true Castilian pride, made all the more notable by his unhappy condition, 'The King alone has the right to pardon, and you are not King yet.' It is alleged, though the fact has not been proved, that Ferdinand answered, 'It will not be long first.' However that may be, half an hour later the crown was on the head of the Prince of the Asturias.

[On Ferdinand's return to the palace, the King and Queen, seeing no better way of calming the populace, abdicated in favour of their son. Instantly a frenzy of joy spread from Aranjuez to Madrid and throughout Spain, no man thinking that the approach of the French might disturb their happiness. At that moment Napoleon's troops were descending from the heights of Somo Sierra and of the Guadarrama. One column was at Buitrago and the other near the Escurial; Murat, with 30,000 men, was within a day's march of Madrid. Meanwhile Ferdinand VII., as he may now be called, was not without anxiety. He again sent to the Emperor asking for the hand of his niece, and despatched the Duke of Parqué to explain the state of affairs to Murat. Then he organised his ministry and recalled his friends, including the canon Escoiquiz.] It was on March 19, just as Murat's staff was traversing the Guadarrama Mountains, that we received the first news of the rising at Aranjuez. The next day we heard of Charles's abdication and Ferdinand's accession. Murat hastened forward, and on the 21st his head-quarters were established at the town of El Molar, a few leagues from Madrid. A fearful tumult was raging in the capital. In its ferocious joy the populace had burnt and pillaged the houses of the Prince of the Peace, his family, and his friends; they would even have been massacred but for the energetic action of Count Beauharnais, who offered them at the French embassy an asylum which no one dared violate.

On learning of the revolution, Prince Murat, usually so communicative, became gloomy and preoccupied, and passed several days without speaking to any of us. Doubtless, in his place, amid a country turned upside down, any other marshal would have found his task very difficult; but Murat's personal

position made it still more complicated. Seeing three of the Emperor's brothers already provided with crowns, while the fourth, Lucien, had declined one, Murat might well flatter himself that Napoleon's intention was to give him the throne of Spain if the Royal Family deserted their country and fled to America. He regretted, therefore, much the accession of Ferdinand, whom the Spanish nation adored and to whom it would rally. Therefore Murat, grounding his action on the fact that he had no orders from the Emperor to recognise Ferdinand VII., continued in his letters to give him the title of Prince of the Asturias, and advised Charles IV. to repudiate an abdication which had been extorted from him by revolt and threats.

The old King and the Queen, regretting their loss of power, wrote bitter complaints to Napoleon of their son, representing his conduct at Aranjuez, not wholly without foundation, as a sort of parricide. On the 23rd Murat entered Madrid at the head of Marshal Moncey's corps. The new King had called upon the people to give a good reception to his *friend* Napoleon's troops. He was punctually obeyed; we saw nothing but friendly faces among the vast and curious crowd. But it was easy to perceive how astonished they were at the sight of our young infantry soldiers. The moral effect was wholly to our disadvantage, and as I compared the broad chests and powerful limbs of the Spaniards who surrounded us with those of our weak and weedy privates, my national pride was humbled. Though I did not foresee the disasters which would arise from the poor opinion of our troops on the part of the Spaniards, I was sorry that the Emperor had not sent into the Peninsula some veteran regiments from the Army of Germany. Still our cavalry, and especially our cuirassiers, an arm unfamiliar to the modern Spaniards, excited their admiration, and the same with the artillery. But a shout of enthusiasm went up when the imperial guard appeared. The sight of the Mamelukes astonished the Spaniards, who could not conceive how the *Christian* French should have admitted *Turks* into their ranks. Ever since the Moorish domination, the peoples of the Peninsula have loathed the Mussulmans, though much afraid of having to fight against them. Four Mamelukes would put twenty Castilians to flight, as was proved before very long.

Murat established himself in a palace belonging to the Prince of the Peace, the only one which the mob had spared, under the impression that it still belonged to the crown. I was lodged hard by with a much respected member of the

Council of the Indies. Hardly had I alighted when Prince Murat, hearing that Godoy's enemies were sending him to prison at Madrid, no doubt to have him murdered there, and that the poor wretch was already at the gate of the town, ordered me to set out with a squadron of dragoons, and prevent at any cost the entry of the Prince of the Peace into the capital, letting the officers of his escort know that he, Murat, would hold them responsible for their prisoner's life. Two leagues from the suburbs I came upon Godoy. Although the unhappy man was terribly wounded and covered with blood, the guards who escorted him had been cruel enough to put irons on his hands and feet, and to tie him on a rough open cart where he was exposed to the scorching rays of the sun, and to thousands of flies attracted by his wounds, which were scarcely covered with coarse linen rags. I was indignant at the sight, and glad to see that it produced the same effect on the French squadron which accompanied me.

The guards escorting the Prince of the Peace, about one hundred in number, were supported by half a battalion of infantry. I explained my object politely to the commanding officer, but he replied with extreme arrogance that he did not take his orders from the commander of the French army. Adopting the same tone, I said that my business being to execute those orders, I should use every means to prevent the prisoner from being taken any farther. My dragoons were not recruits, but stalwart veterans of Austerlitz; determination could be read in their faces. I placed them in line so as to bar the passage of the cart, and told the officer of the guard that I waited for him to fire the first shot, but that I should then at once charge with my squadron upon him and his men. The officers of my dragoons had already given the order to draw swords, and the ardour of our adversaries appeared to be cooling a little when the commander of the half battalion in the rear came to the head of the column to see what the disturbance was about, and I recognised in him Don Miguel Rafael Cœli, the jolly officer with whom I had travelled from Nantes to Salamanca in 1802.[1] Being a sensible man he understood Murat's reasons for objecting to the Prince of the Peace being brought into Madrid. If he were murdered, as was pretty certain, the French army would incur obloquy for not preventing it, while if it interfered it would provoke a bloody collision. As second in command

[1] [See p. 82.]

Don Rafael had the right to give his opinion. He spoke to the officer commanding in the same sense that I had done, and it was agreed that Godoy should be detained for the time in the village of Pinto. The poor wretch had been a silent witness of what took place, and on reaching his prison he expressed his thanks to me in very good French, begging me to convey his gratitude to Prince Murat.

I took the liberty of pointing out to the guards the cruelty and disgrace to the Spanish uniform in putting irons on a prisoner who was guarded by 400 men. Don Rafael supported me, and we succeeded in getting the prince set free from his iron collar, handcuffs, and fetters. He was only held by a chain attached to his body, so that, though not free in prison, he could move a little and lie down on a mattress, which I made them give him. His wounds, received five days ago, had not yet been dressed; the surgeon of our dragoons attended him, and the officers and even the troopers lent him linen.

Though I could reckon on the honesty of the infantry commander, I had little confidence with regard to the treatment which the Prince of the Peace would receive when I had left him in the hands of his cruel enemies, the guard. I took it on myself, therefore, to quarter the French squadron in the village, and arrange with the captain that a sentry should always be placed inside the prison to keep an eye on the one posted there by the guards. Murat approved what I had done, and for further security sent a battalion to take up its quarters at Pinto, with orders to keep a sharp look-out on the guards. Finally, Ferdinand VII., passing through the place next day on his way to Madrid, received from the officer of the guards a report of what had happened. Dreading above all things any complications with the French, the new King and his ministers commended him for having avoided a conflict with the dragoons, and ordered Godoy to be left in the prison at Pinto. Some days later they had him moved to the old fortress of Villa Viciosa, at a greater distance from the capital.

On March 24 Ferdinand made his royal entry into Madrid, being received by the people with indescribable joy. An immense crowd greeted him with cheers, women threw flowers in his path, and men spread their cloaks under his horses' feet. Our troops did not appear officially. Murat did not even visit Ferdinand, not knowing, until the Emperor had decided, whether the father or the son was to be recognised as

sovereign of the Spains. If Napoleon intended to seize the crown, he would probably prefer to see it restored for the moment to the feeble Charles, rather than have the more difficult task of taking it from the nation's favourite, Ferdinand. Murat, therefore, felt pretty sure that the Emperor would refuse to recognise the new King.

Ferdinand, meanwhile, uneasy as to the view which Napoleon might take of his accession, consulted M. de Beauharnais, who, too upright a man himself to think it possible that Napoleon could take any steps against the liberty of a prince coming to seek him in the character of arbiter, advised Ferdinand to meet the Emperor at Bayonne. The King's friends doubted; but General Savary unexpectedly appeared with a letter from Napoleon, which determined him to take the course suggested. Moreover, he learnt that his father and mother were on their way to lay their version of the case before the Emperor, and it seemed well to anticipate them. The advice given by M. de Beauharnais had in fact been prompted by Murat and Savary. The Emperor had started for Bayonne on April 2, travelling slowly in order to leave time for events to mature. [Ferdinand sent his brother Charles on in advance, and himself left Madrid on April 10, on the faith of Savary's assurances that Napoleon was already at Bayonne. Accompanied by that general, he reached Burgos, where he did not, as he had been led to expect, find Napoleon; but did find the roads covered with French columns on the march. His suspicions that some trap was being prepared for him were calmed by Savary's assurances that Napoleon was at Vittoria. On arriving at that town, Ferdinand learnt with some surprise that, so far from having crossed the frontier, the Emperor had not yet arrived at Bayonne. This was more than his Spanish pride could endure; his counsellors pointed out that he had gone as far to meet a foreign sovereign as was consistent with his dignity, and in spite of all that Savary could say, he decided to go no farther. Furious at seeing his prey on the point of escaping him, the general posted off to Bayonne, and found that the Emperor had arrived on the 14th.

By the next day Ferdinand was practically a prisoner. Marshal Bessières had been secretly ordered to arrest him if he attempted to return, and Savary was coming to see that the order was executed. But no step of this kind was necessary, for Ferdinand, hearing that his parents, at the instance of his sister the ex-Queen of Etruria, were already

on their way from Madrid to Bayonne, in fear of letting them get the ear of the Emperor before him, insisted on setting out at once, undeterred by the protests of the people and the forebodings of older advisers. On April 20 he crossed the Bidassoa. Not an infantry picket was there to present arms to him, nor a trooper to escort him. When at length some officers of the Emperor's household met him, they accosted him as Prince of the Asturias. It was too late to go back; Ferdinand was in France and in Napoleon's power.

The Emperor, who was occupying the château of Marac, where I had been lodged in 1803 with Augereau, called upon Ferdinand, treated him politely, and invited him to dinner, but never gave him the title of King. On the next day he threw off the mask and announced to Ferdinand and his ministers that having been charged by Providence to create a great empire and lower the power of England, and having learnt by experience that he could not count on the assistance of Spain so long as the Bourbon family governed it, he had determined to restore the crown neither to Ferdinand nor to Charles, but to place it on the head of a member of his own family. Ferdinand and his advisers, overwhelmed by this statement, refused at first to accept it, answering with some reason that in any case no member of the French imperial family had any right to the crown of Spain.

Meanwhile the old King and Queen were approaching Bayonne, which they reached on April 20. Napoleon received them with royal honours, and brought them to dine with him at the château of Marac. There they found their beloved Manuel Godoy, whom they had not seen since the outbreak of Aranjuez. Before leaving Madrid, however, they had had an interview with Murat, and implored his intervention on behalf of the Prince of the Peace. The Emperor also had instructed him that Godoy's life was to be saved at all costs. To Murat's overtures, the provisional Junta, under the presidency of Prince Anthony, Ferdinand's uncle, replied that they had not the power to release so important a prisoner. Murat thereupon surrounded the castle of Villa Viciosa with a French brigade, ordering the general to bring away the Prince of the Peace amicably or otherwise. His guards, with the assent of the commandant, the Marquis of Chasteler, a Belgian in the Spanish service, having declared that they would stab him rather than give him up alive, Murat let them know that if they carried their purpose into effect they should be

shot without mercy over his corpse. Thereupon the Junta ordered his release. The poor wretch arrived in our camp in a pitiable state; Murat received him kindly, provided for his wants, and sent him off at once with an escort of cavalry to Bayonne. Happening to recognise me as one of those who had saved him at Pinto, he expressed his desire that I should be of his escort. I should have liked it very well, but as I have already said the supernumerary aides-de-camp only get the disagreeable duties. This task was therefore entrusted to one of the regular staff, while I before long had one of extreme danger.

During the interview between Godoy and the elder sovereigns, Ferdinand came to pay his respects to his father. Charles received him with contumely, and had he not been in the Emperor's palace, would have driven him from his presence. On the following day, yielding to the persuasions of the Queen and the Prince of the Peace, who argued that as he would no longer be able to reign over Spain he would do better to accept the position which the Emperor offered him in France, and thus secure at once repose for his declining years and vengeance upon Ferdinand, Charles offered no more resistance to Napoleon's plans.]

While great events were maturing at Bayonne, Prince Murat, who had provisionally the control of the Government at Madrid, had caused Charles' protest to be published, and Ferdinand's name to be suppressed on all public documents, much to the discontent of the people and the grandees. When the news from Bayonne arrived, brought by secret emissaries in the disguise of peasants, whom Ferdinand's friends had sent, their agitation increased. The storm was grumbling around us, nor was it long before it broke out at Madrid.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CHARLES IV., the Queen, Ferdinand, and his brother, Prince Charles, being all at Bayonne, the only members of the Royal Family remaining in Spain were the ex-Queen of Etruria and her son, the old Prince Anthony, and Charles IV.'s youngest son, Prince Francis,[1] who was then only twelve or thirteen years old. Murat, having received orders to send these members of the House of Bourbon to Bayonne, the Queen of Etruria and Prince Anthony expressed themselves willing to leave Spain, but the young Prince Francis was still a ward of the Junta, and that body, in alarm at seeing all the princes of the Royal Family carried off one by one, definitely opposed the child's departure Then public excitement became very great, and in the course of May 1 numerous groups assembled in the principal streets of Madrid, and especially in the large square known as the Puerta del Sol. These were dispersed by some of our cavalry, but on the following day, just as the princes were getting into their carriage, some servants came out of the palace exclaiming that Don Francis was crying bitterly and clinging to the furniture, declaring that he had been born in Spain and would not leave it. It is easy to understand the effect which such generous sentiments, expressed by a child of the royal house, who, in the absence of his two brothers, was the hope of the nation, would produce upon the mind of a proud and free people. In an instant the mob armed itself, and massacred every Frenchman who was caught by himself in the town. Most of our troops being camped outside, it was necessary to warn them, and this it was not easy to do.

On hearing the first shots I wished to go to my post near the marshal, whose hotel was close to my lodging. I leapt on my horse, and was going out, when my host, the venerable member of the Indian Council, stopped me, pointing out that the street was occupied by some thirty armed insurgents, whom it was clear that I could not escape. I remarked to

[1] [Francisco de Paula, afterwards father of Francisco d'Assis, sometime king-consort of Spain.]

the excellent man that my honour required me to brave all dangers in order to get to my general. He advised me to go out on foot, and leading me to the end of the garden, opened a little gate, and very kindly himself led me by back lanes to the rear of Prince Murat's house, where I found a French sentry. This much respected gentleman, to whom in all probability I owed my life, was, as I shall never forget, called Don Antonio Hernandez.

At head-quarters I found great excitement, for although Murat had with him only two battalions and some squadrons, he was preparing to march resolutely to face the tumult. Everybody but myself was on horseback; I was in despair. Presently, however, General Belliard, chief of the staff, having given orders that some pickets of grenadiers should be sent to drive back the enemy's sharpshooters, who already were occupying the approaches to the palace, I offered to guide one of them through the street in which the house of Don Hernandez stood, and as soon as the gate was cleared I got my horse and joined Prince Murat.

No military duty is more dangerous than that of a staff officer in a country, still more in a city, which is in a state of insurrection. Having to go almost always alone through the midst of the enemy when carrying orders to the troops, he is exposed to the risk of assassination without the power of defending himself. Hardly was Murat out of his palace when he sent off officers to all the officers round Madrid with orders to bring the troops in by all the gates at once. The cavalry of the imperial guard and a division of dragoons were quartered at Buen Retiro. This was one of the nearest camps to head-quarters, but one of the most dangerous to reach, since, in order to get there, it was necessary to go through the two largest streets of the town, those of Alcalà and San Geronimo, where nearly every window was lined with Spanish sharpshooters. I need not say that, as this was the most difficult mission, the commander-in-chief did not assign it to one of his regular aides-de-camp. It was on me that it devolved, and I started at a smart trot over a pavement which the sun had made very slippery.

I had hardly gone two hundred yards from the staff when I was received by numerous musket-shots, but as the tumult was but just beginning, the fire was endurable, all the more so since the men at the windows were shopkeepers and workmen, without much practice in handling muskets. Still the horse of one of my dragoons was knocked over by a bullet,

and the people came out of the houses to slaughter the poor soldier: but his comrades and I laid about us with our sabres, and when we had stretched a dozen of the rioters on the ground the rest took to their heels. Then the dragoon, taking the hand of one of his comrades, was able to run with us till we reached the outposts of our cavalry camp.

While defending the dismounted dragoon, I had received a blow from a dagger in my jacket sleeve, and two of my troopers had been slightly wounded. My orders were to bring the divisions to the Puerta del Sol, and they started at a gallop. The squadrons of the guard, commanded by the celebrated Daumesmil, marched first, with the Mamelukes leading. The riot had had time to increase; we were fired upon from nearly all the houses, especially the palace of the Duke of Hijar, where every window was lined with good shots. We lost there several men, among others the terrible Mustapha, that Mameluke who went near to catching the Grand Duke Constantine at Austerlitz. His comrades swore to avenge him, but for the moment it was impossible to halt, and the cavalry rode on rapidly under a hail of bullets. In the Puerta del Sol we found Murat engaged with a huge compact crowd of armed men, among whom could be seen some thousands of Spanish soldiers, who had brought guns, and were firing on the French with grape. On seeing the dreaded Mamelukes arrive, the Spaniards made some attempt at resistance, but the sight of the *Turks* alarmed the bravest of them too much for their resolution to last long. The Mamelukes, dashing scimitar in hand into the dense mass, sent a hundred heads flying in a trice, and opened a way for the chasseurs and dragoons, who set to furiously with their sabres. The Spaniards, rolled back from the square, tried to escape by the many wide streets which meet there from all parts of the town, but they were stopped by other French columns whom Murat had bidden to rendezvous at that point. There were also partial combats in other quarters, but this was the most important, and decided the victory in our favour. The insurgents had 1,200 or 1,500 men killed and many wounded, and their loss would have been much greater if Murat had not given the order to cease firing.

As a soldier I was bound to fight any who attacked the French army, but I could not help recognising in my inmost conscience that our cause was a bad one, and that the Spaniards were quite right in trying to drive out strangers, who, after coming among them in the guise of friends, were wishing to

dethrone their sovereign and take forcible possession of the kingdom. This war, therefore, seemed to me wicked, but I was a soldier, and I must march or be charged with cowardice. The greater part of the army thought as I did, and, like me, obeyed orders all the same.

Hostilities had now ceased almost everywhere; the town was occupied by our infantry, and the cavalry received orders to return to camp. The insurgents who had fired so briskly from the Duke of Hijar's palace on the imperial guard when they first came by, had had the imprudent boldness to remain at their post, and recommence their fire as our squadrons returned. These, however, indignant at the sight of their comrades' bodies, which the inhabitants had barbarously cut to pieces, dismounted a number of troopers, who, climbing into the windows of the ground floor, penetrated into the palace, and hastened to take terrible revenge. The Mamelukes, who had suffered the heaviest loss, entered the rooms, scimitar and blunderbus in hand, and pitilessly massacred every insurgent that they met, the greater part being the Duke's servants. Not one escaped, and their corpses, thrown over the balconies, mingled their blood with that of the Mamelukes whom they had slaughtered in the morning.

Thus the fight was ended and victory assured. Murat had now to attend to two important matters: to report to the Emperor what had happened at Madrid, and to secure the departure of the Queen of Etruria, the old Prince Anthony, and above all the young Don Francis. The child, frightened by the sound of the firing, now agreed to go with his sister and his uncle, but this party could only travel by short stages, while it was important that Murat's despatches should reach the Emperor by the first possible moment. You will guess what happened. So long as Spain had been tranquil, the Prince had entrusted his frequent reports to members of his regular staff; but now that it was a question of crossing a great part of the kingdom in the midst of a population who, at the news of fighting at Madrid, would be ready to murder French officers, it became a job for a supernumerary aide-de-camp. As I quite expected, although according to the roster for duty it was not my turn to go, this dangerous mission was entrusted to me, and I accepted it without remark.

Murat, who quite misjudged the Castilian character, imagined that they would be frightened by the suppression of the revolt at Madrid, and would make a complete submission without venturing to take up arms. As he flattered himself that

Napoleon destined him for the throne of Charles IV. he was beaming, and, as he handed me the despatches, said more than once: 'You may repeat to the Emperor what I say in this letter; my victory over the insurgents in the capital assures *us* the peaceable possession of Spain.' I did not believe a word of it, but was careful not to say so, and merely asked permission to take advantage as far as Buitrago of the escort which was going with the Spanish princes. I knew that many peasants from the neighbourhood who had taken part in the outbreak were now hiding in the country villages, and would be quite ready to attack me if I left the town. Murat recognised the justice of my remark. I hired a horse, and travelling with the escort reached Buitrago that evening. The princes were to sleep there, so from that point there was no more escort for me, and I had to launch out into the unknown.

Our dragoon officers, seeing me make ready to start at nightfall to cross the Guadarrama Mountains, advised me to wait for daylight. But in the first place I knew that the despatches were urgent, and I did not wish the Emperor and Murat to accuse me of having slackened my pace through fear, and further I knew that the quicker I got away from the neighbourhood of the capital, and outstripped the news of the fighting, the less I should have to fear the exasperation of the people on my road. I found, in fact, that the inhabitants of Buitrago had received their first news of what had happened that morning at Madrid from the muleteers who conducted the princes' carriages, but as the postilion whom I took from Buitrago had probably heard the news from the one who had brought me there, I resolved to get rid of him by a trick. After we had gone about two leagues, I told the man that I had left in the stable of the post a handkerchief containing 20 douros (4*l.*), and that while I considered the money as practically lost, I thought it was still just possible that no one had found it, and that he must therefore go back at once to Buitrago, and that if he brought me the handkerchief and its contents at the next stage, where I would wait for him, he should have five douros for himself. Delighted with the prospect of this windfall, the postilion turned back at once, and I went on to the next stage. Nothing had been heard there of the fighting; I was in uniform: but to remove any suspicion which the postmaster and his people might have at seeing me arrive alone, I told them that the horse of the postilion who had been with me having fallen and hurt himself, I had advised the man to walk him back to Buitrago. They gave me at once a fresh horse and another

postilion, and I galloped off without any qualms about disappointing the Buitrago postilion. The important thing was, that I was now in sole possession of my secret, and I knew that if I stopped nowhere, I could reach Bayonne before rumour had brought the intelligence of the events at Madrid.

All night I travelled through the mountains—the road is good, and at daybreak I entered L'Herma. Here there was a French garrison, as indeed there was in every town which I had to pass on the way to Bayonne. Everywhere the generals and officers offered me refreshment, asking what news there was; but I kept my mouth shut, fearing lest an accident should compel me to halt somewhere, and so be outstripped by news which I had myself spread, whereby I should be exposed to an attack from the peasants.

From Madrid to Bayonne is the same distance as from Bayonne to Paris; that is to say 225 leagues, a long journey when one has to ride post with one's sword by one's side without a single quarter of an hour's rest, and in a scorching heat. I was tired out and overcome with the need of sleep, but I did not yield to it for a moment, knowing well the necessity for getting on quickly. To keep awake I paid the postilions something extra on condition that as we galloped they should sing to me their Spanish songs. At last I saw the Bidassoa, and entered France.

Marac is only two stages from Saint-Jean de Luz. I got there on May 5, covered with dust, at the moment when the Emperor was taking an after-dinner walk in the park with the Queen of Spain on his arm and Charles IV. beside him. The Empress Josephine and the Princes Ferdinand and Charles followed them, and the rear was brought up by Marshal Duroc and several ladies. As soon as the Emperor was informed by the aide-de-camp on duty that an officer had arrived with despatches from Prince Murat, he came towards me, followed by the members of the Spanish Royal Family, and asked aloud: 'What news from Madrid?' The presence of the listeners was embarrassing, and as I thought that Napoleon would no doubt be glad to have the first fruits of my intelligence, I deemed it wise to do nothing but present my despatches to the Emperor and look steadily at him without answering his question. His Majesty understood me, and retired a few paces to read Murat's report. Having finished, he called me and went towards a solitary garden-walk, asking me all the time many questions about the fighting at Madrid. I could easily see that he shared Murat's

opinion and considered that the victory of May 2 must put an end to all resistance in Spain. I held the contrary belief, and if Napoleon had asked my view I should have thought it dishonourable to conceal it; but I had to confine myself to answering the Emperor's questions with due respect, and I could only indirectly let him know my presentiments. In narrating the revolution at Madrid I depicted in most vivid terms the despair of the people at hearing that the remaining members of the Royal Family were to be carried away, the fierce courage which the inhabitants, even the women, had shown, during the fighting, the gloomy and threatening demeanour retained by the populace after our victory. I might perhaps have revealed all my thoughts, but Napoleon cut short my thoughts, exclaiming: 'Bah! they will calm down and will bless me as soon as they see their country freed from the discredit and disorder into which it has been thrown by the weakest and most corrupt administration that ever existed.' After this outburst, uttered in a sharp tone, Napoleon sent me back to the end of the garden to request the King and Queen of Spain to come to him, and followed me slowly reading over Murat's despatches. The ex-sovereigns came forward alone to meet the Emperor, and I suppose he informed them of the fighting at Madrid, for Charles came up quickly to his son Ferdinand, and said to him in a loud voice and in a tone of extreme anger: 'Wretch! you may now be satisfied! Madrid has been bathed in the blood of my subjects shed in consequence of your criminal rebellion against your father; may their blood be on your head!' The Queen joined in heaping bitter reproaches on her son, and went so far as to offer to strike him. The ladies and the officers, feeling that this distasteful spectacle was not one for them, withdrew, and Napoleon put a stop to it.

Ferdinand, who had not replied by a single word to the objurgations of his parents, resigned the crown to his father that evening, less through contrition than through fear of being regarded as the author of the conspiracy which had overthrown Charles. Next day the old King, in his ignoble desire for revenge, encouraged by the Queen and the Prince of the Peace, made over to the Emperor all his rights to the throne of Spain on certain conditions, the principal one being that by which he was to have the estate of Compiègne with a pension of seven and a half million francs. Ferdinand was cowardly enough also to renounce his hereditary rights in favour of Napoleon, in return for a pension of a million and the château of Navarre

in Normandy. As both these houses required repair, Charles, with his Queen, his daughter, and the Prince of the Peace, went for the present to Fontainebleau, while Ferdinand, his two brothers, and his uncle were sent to Valençay, in Berri, where they were well treated but kept under strict surveillance. Thus was consummated the most iniquitous spoliation which modern history records. In all times a conqueror in a fair and open war has been held to have the right to take possession of the dominions of the conquered, but I can say with sincerity that the conduct of Napoleon in this scandalous affair was unworthy of so great a man. To offer himself as mediator between a father and a son in order to draw them into a trap and then plunder them both—this was an odious atrocity which history has branded, and which Providence did not delay to punish. It was the war in Spain which brought about Napoleon's fall.

Still, to do him justice, with all his lack of political honesty, the Emperor was under no delusion as to the reprehensible nature of his action. I have heard, on the authority of one of his ministers, M. Defermon, that he admitted this at the council board, but he added that in politics one must never forget the great axiom 'success and necessity justify the means.' Now, rightly or wrongly, the Emperor was firmly convinced that the only way of keeping the north in check was to found in the south of Europe a great empire under the protection of France, which could only be done by taking possession of Spain.

Having now this fine kingdom to dispose of, Napoleon offered it to his eldest brother, Joseph, then King of Naples. He has been blamed for not giving it to his brother-in-law Murat, who, as an experienced soldier, seemed better suited to govern a proud nation than the timid, careless, and luxurious Joseph. Doubtless when Murat first entered Spain everything about him, even to his extraordinary costume, delighted the Castilians, and if they had had then to accept a King from Napoleon's family they would have preferred the chivalrous Murat to the feeble Joseph; but since the fighting at Madrid their admiration for him had been changed to bitter hatred. I have no doubt that the Emperor had originally destined Murat for the Spanish throne, but as soon as he realised the dislike of the nation towards him he gave up the plan as impossible, and sent him to replace Joseph at Naples when he gave the Spanish crown to the latter. It was unfortunate, for in the war which presently broke out Murat

would have been most useful, while King Joseph was only a hindrance.

In order to give some colour of legality to his brother's accession, Napoleon called upon all the provinces to select deputies who should come to Bayonne to frame a constitution. Many abstained, but the greater number answered the summons, some through curiosity, others in the patriotic hope that one of their Kings would be restored to them. When assembled, they soon perceived that they would have no freedom of deliberation; nevertheless, whether convinced that a brother of the mighty Emperor could alone restore happiness to Spain, or urged by the desire of escaping from the trap in which they found themselves, they all recognised Joseph's sovereignty. Very few, however, remained with him, the greater part returning hurriedly to Spain, where, as soon as they arrived, they protested against the vote, which they said had been extorted from them.

I had left Bayonne on May 11 to return to Madrid with despatches from the Emperor to Murat. Throughout the provinces which I traversed I found people's minds much disturbed. It was known that Ferdinand, the darling of the people, had been forced to abdicate, and they perceived that Napoleon was about to grasp the throne of Spain. An organised insurrection was growing up on either side. I should certainly have been assassinated had not our troops been in occupation of all the towns and villages between France and Madrid. Though I had an escort from one post to another, I was more than once attacked. A trooper was killed by my side in the defile of Pancorvo, and I came across the dead bodies of two of our soldiers in the mountains of Somo Sierra. It was the first taste of what the Spaniards were preparing for us.

The despatches which I carried to Murat contained the official announcement of his elevation to the throne of Naples. For several days he was very gloomy, and at last fell so seriously ill that Napoleon had to send General Savary to take the command of the army—a task to which his military talents were unequal, especially in the difficult circumstances which were about to occur. Murat's illness for a time endangered his life. As soon as he was better he made haste to leave Spain. Before his departure he asked me if I would stay at Madrid with General Belliard, who wished to keep me. I had foreseen this question, and as it by no means suited me, after serving under several marshals and a prince, to be lost

in the obscure crowd of the officers on the general staff and to do postman's work under fire, earning no glory nor hope of promotion, I answered that I was still Marshal Augereau's aide-de-camp, that he had agreed to my doing duty with Prince Murat, but that when Murat left Spain I considered my mission at an end, and asked leave to return to my former chief. So I left Madrid with Murat on June 17. We travelled by easy stages, and reached Bayonne on July 3. There Murat took the title of King of Naples. The officers of his staff going to congratulate him, he proposed to us to follow him into Italy, promising rapid promotion to those who would take service with him. All accepted except Major Lamothe and myself; for I had firmly resolved to wear no uniform but that of the French army. Leaving my horses at Bayonne, I returned to Paris, and passed three happy months with my mother and Marshal Augereau.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The combat of May 2 and the abduction of the Royal Family had made the nation furious. Every province rose against Joseph's Government, and though he reached Madrid and was proclaimed on July 23, he had no authority in the country. Madrid, although the habitual residence of the sovereigns of Spain, has no influence on the provinces, each of which was once a separate kingdom, and has preserved its title. Each has its capital, its customs, its own laws, and its own local administration; so that the possession of Madrid by an enemy does not affect its independence. Thus in 1808 each province had its junta, its army, its stores, and its revenues; but the junta of Seville was recognised as the central power.

The French army would thus have been in a critical condition, with the whole of Spain in arms against it, even if it had been under the orders of an able general, and its composition as strong as it actually was weak. We suffered reverses by sea and land; a squadron had to surrender in Cadiz roads just as Marshal Moncey had to retire from the kingdom of Valencia. The junta of Seville declared war against France in the name of Ferdinand VII. General Dupont, whom Savary had imprudently despatched without support into Andalusia, found at the beginning of July that the people were all rising round him, and, learning that 10,000 men from the camp of San Roque were advancing under the orders of General Castaños, resolved to withdraw towards Madrid, and with that view sent Vedel's division to occupy the Sierra Morena and reopen communications. But, instead of following his advanced guard promptly, Dupont, who from an excellent general of division had become a very bad commander of an army corps, resolved to give battle where he stood, and ordered Vedel's division, which was already ten leagues away, to come back. This was the first mistake, and besides this, Dupont scattered the troops that remained with him, and lost precious time at Andujar, on the banks of the Guadalquivir.

The Spaniards, reinforced by several Swiss regiments, took advantage of this delay to send part of their troops over to the bank opposite to that which our army occupied; so that we found ourselves between two fires. Still, so far, nothing was lost, if our men had fought courageously and in good order; but Dupont had handled his troops so badly that on arriving before the defile of Baylen the rear of the column was three leagues from the head. Then, instead of bringing his force together, General Dupont sent each regiment and each gun into action as they came up. Our weak young soldiers, exhausted by fifteen hours' marching and eight hours' fighting, were dropping with weariness under the rays of an Andalusian sun. The most part could neither march nor bear arms any longer, and lay down instead of fighting. Then Dupont asked for a truce, which the Spaniards were all the more ready to accept that they feared matters might shortly change to their disadvantage. Vedel's division had, in fact, at that moment come up in rear of the Spanish force, and was attacking them successfully. They sent a flag of truce to let the general know that an armistice had been agreed upon with General Dupont. Vedel took no notice of it and fought on vigorously. Two Spanish regiments had laid down their arms; others were in flight; and Vedel was only a short league from Dupont, and would soon have completely relieved him, when an aide-de-camp came from the latter through the enemy's army bringing orders to take no further steps as arrangements were being made for an armistice. Thereupon Vedel, instead of yielding further to the happy inspiration under which he had refused to recognise the authority of a chief who could send orders to his subordinates only by passing them through the hands of the enemy, halted in the middle of his victory and gave the order to cease firing. The Spaniards meanwhile had only eight cartridges per man left; but their supports were coming up and they wished to gain time. General Dupont asked permission from General Reding, a Swiss in the Spanish service, to pass through with his army and return to Madrid. Reding at first agreed, but afterwards declared that he could do nothing without the authority of General Castaños, who was some leagues away. He in his turn wished to refer the matter to the junta, and they raised all sorts of difficulties.

Meanwhile Dupont's young recruits were in a most unfortunate position; he kept giving contradictory orders, alternately requiring Vedel to attack and to take back his division to

Madrid. Vedel took the latter course, and the next day was at the foot of Sierra Morena, out of reach of attack from Castaños. But unluckily General Dupont had decided to capitulate, and with indescribable weakness had comprehended Vedel's troops in the capitulation, ordering them to return to Baylen. Having the way to Madrid open to them, they tumultuously refused; but instead of taking advantage of their enthusiasm, Vedel pointed out that they would expose Dupont's men to reprisals, adding that the terms of capitulation were not severe since it was stipulated that they would be taken back to France, where they would get their arms again. The officers and soldiers declared that in that case they had better retreat, arms and all, to Madrid; but General Vedel preached passive obedience until he succeeded in bringing his division back to Baylen, where it lay down its arms. General Dupont deserves much blame for having included in the capitulation a division which was already out of the enemy's reach; but what must we think of General Vedel, who obeyed the orders of a commander no longer at liberty and handed over to the Spaniards nearly 10,000 efficient men? Dupont pushed his infatuation so far as to include all the troops of his army corps, even those who had not crossed the Sierra Morena. General Castaños required that these detachments should come twenty-five leagues to lay down their arms. One commander only, who deserves to be named, the brave Major de Sainte-Eglise, replied that he would not take orders from a general who was a prisoner of war, and by a rapid march, in spite of the attacks of the insurgent peasants, he succeeded with little loss in reaching the outposts of the French camp before Madrid. The Emperor promoted him to the rank of colonel. With the exception of this battalion, the whole of Dupont's army, 25,000 strong, was disarmed. Then the Spaniards, having no more to fear, refused to keep the articles of the capitulation, which stipulated for the return of the French troops to France, and not only declared them prisoners of war, but shamefully ill-treated them and allowed several thousand soldiers to be slaughtered by the peasants.

Dupont, Vedel, and some generals alone obtained leave to return to France. The officers and the soldiers were at first packed on board pontoons in Cadiz roads, but an epidemic fever broke out among them, and the Spanish authorities, fearing that Cadiz might be infected, sent the survivors to the desert island of Cabrera, where there was neither water nor houses. There our poor men, receiving every week some

casks of brackish water, some damaged ship biscuit, and a little salt meat, lived almost like savages. Without clothing, linen, or medicine, getting no news of their families, or even from France, they were obliged to shelter themselves in burrows like wild beasts. This lasted six years, until the Peace of 1814, by which time most of the prisoners were dead of misery and grief. M. de Lasalle, who became orderly officer to King Louis Philippe, was among the number, and when he was released he, like most of his comrades, had been almost entirely naked for more than six years. When it was pointed out to the Spaniards that their violation of the Treaty of Baylen was contrary to the law of nations in force among all civilised peoples, they replied that the arrest of their king, Ferdinand VII., had been no less illegal, and that they were merely following the example which Napoleon had set them—a reproach which, it must be admitted, was not without foundation.

When the news of the disaster at Baylen reached the Emperor his rage was fearful. Up to then he had regarded the Spaniards as on a par in courage with the Italians, and supposed that their rising was merely a peasant revolt which would quickly be dispersed by a few French battalions. But his eagles had been humbled, and French troops had lost the prestige of unbroken victory. Deeply must he have regretted that he had allowed his army to be composed of recruits, instead of sending the veterans whom he had left in Germany. His rage against the generals was indescribable. He made the mistake of imprisoning them to avoid the scandal of a trial, which led to their being regarded as the victims of arbitrary power. It was five years before they were brought to trial by court martial.

The capitulation of Baylen, as may be supposed, caused the insurrection to spread widely; nor did the defeat of the army of the Asturias by Bessières do anything to check it. The Spanish contingent, under General La Romana, which had served under Napoleon, and had been left on the coast of the Baltic, was brought back with the help of the English. The fortresses which the Spaniards still held were defended vigorously, and open towns, following the lead of Saragossa, turned themselves into fortresses. The Spanish army of Andalusia was set free to march on Madrid, and King Joseph with an army corps retreated beyond the Ebro, where the remainder of our troops raising the sieges in which they were engaged gradually assembled. Soon we learnt a new disaster. Portugal,

owing to the imprudence with which Junot had scattered his forces, had been lost to us. Attacked by Sir Arthur Wellesley at Vimeira with superior forces,[1] he had been compelled to capitulate. That day marked the beginning of Wellesley's fame and fortune; he was the junior lieutenant-general in the English army, and commanded that day only in consequence of a delay in the landing of his seniors. The terms of capitulation were that the French army should evacuate Portugal and be taken back to France by sea without being disarmed. They were faithfully executed by the English; but instead of being landed at Bordeaux, the troops were taken to Lorient.

By this time Napoleon had ordered up from Germany three army corps of infantry and much cavalry—all veterans who had fought at Jena, Eylau, and Friedland. To these he added a large portion of his guard, and prepared to set out himself for Spain, at their head. Their number amounted to more than 100,000, which, with the divisions already in Spain, would raise our army to 200,000 men.

Some days before starting, the Emperor, intending to take Augereau with him if the wound he had received at Eylau allowed him to take the command, had summoned him to Saint-Cloud. Being on duty, I accompanied the marshal, and while Napoleon walked about with Augereau I stayed on one side with his aides-de-camp. It appears that after discussing the matter which they had in hand their conversation turned on the battle of Eylau, and the noble conduct of the 14th. Augereau spoke of the devoted manner in which I had carried orders to that regiment through the swarming Cossacks, and entered into full details of the dangers which I had run in accomplishing that mission, and of the really miraculous manner in which I had escaped death after being stripped and left naked on the snow. The Emperor replied: 'Marbot's conduct was admirable, and I have given him the Cross for it.' The marshal having quite correctly declared that I had received no reward, Napoleon maintained his statement, and in order to prove it sent for Prince Berthier, the adjutant-general. He looked through the registers, the result of his search being the discovery that the Emperor, on hearing of my exploit at Eylau, had indeed entered the name of Marbot, aide-de-camp to Marshal Augereau among the officers to be decorated. He had, however, not added my Christian name, not knowing that my brother

[1] [English, about 16,000 men (not more than half of whom were engaged) and 18 guns; French, 14,000 men and 3 guns.]

was on the marshal's staff as supernumerary; so that when the time came to deliver the patents, Prince Berthier, always very busy, had said, to save his secretary trouble, 'The Cross must be given to the elder.' So my brother got decorated, though it was his first action, and, since he was only on temporary leave from the Indies, and his regiment was at the Isle of France, he did not officially even belong to the Grand Army. Thus was fulfilled the prediction which Augereau had expressed to him when he said, 'If you come on the same staff as your brother you will do each other harm.' Anyhow, after scolding Berthier a little, the Emperor came towards me, spoke to me kindly, and, taking the Cross from one of his orderly officers, fastened it on my breast. October 29, 1808, was one of the happiest days of my life. At that time the Legion of Honour had not been lavishly given, and a value was attached to it which since then it has unfortunately lost. Decorated at 26! I was beside myself with joy. The good marshal's satisfaction was equal to mine, and in order to allow my mother to share it he took me to her. No promotion that I ever got pleased her as much. To complete my satisfaction, Marshal Duroc sent for the hat which a cannon-ball had pierced on my head at the battle of Eylau, and which the Emperor wished to see.

By Napoleon's own advice, Augereau declined to go on the campaign. Accordingly, he asked Lannes, who had a command in Spain, kindly to take me with him; not, however, as supernumerary, in which capacity I had been with that marshal in the Friedland campaign, but as a regular member of the staff; but if Augereau returned to duty, I was to go back to him. So in November I set out for Bayonne, where, for the fourth time, I was to report myself to a new chief. My outfit had been left there, and was all ready for me. Indeed, I was able to lend the marshal a horse, as his had not yet come when the Emperor crossed the frontier. I knew the country through which we had to pass, and the ways of it, well; the language a little; so that I was able to be of some use to the marshal, who had never been in these parts before.

Nearly all the officers who had been on Lannes' staff having got promotion at the Peace of Tilsit, the marshal was obliged to form a new staff for Spain. He himself was a man of strong character; but from various causes he was obliged to select officers most of whom, for one reason or another, had had little experience of war. They were all brave enough; but it was the least military staff on which I had ever served.

The senior aide-de-camp was Colonel O'Meara, brother-in-law to Clarke, Duke of Feltre. He ended his days as commandant of a small place on the Belgian frontier. Then came Major Guéhéneuc, brother-in-law to Lannes, who commanded the 26th Light Infantry at the Beresina. Major Saint-Mars was the third. After being taken prisoner in Russia he became general secretary of the Legion of Honour. I was the fourth. The fifth was Marquis Serafino d'Albuquerque, a great Spanish noble, fond of good living, and very plucky. He was killed by a cannon-ball at Essling. Sixth, Captain Watteville, son of the Landammann of the Helvetic Republic, representing the Swiss nation; Lannes being titular colonel of the Swiss troops in the French service. He too went on the Russian campaign as a major of lancers. In spite of my care, he succumbed to cold and fatigue as we got near Wilna. The seventh was the famous Labédoyère. He was a tall and handsome man, brave, cultivated, and witty; a good talker, though with a slight stammer. He became aide-de-camp to Prince Eugène Beauharnais, and was colonel in 1814. The story of his bringing his regiment over to the Emperor at the return from Elba is well known. Under the Restoration he was tried and shot. The eighth aide-de-camp was named De Viry. He belonged to an ancient Savoyard family. So far as I knew, he had no bad qualities, and I became very intimate with him; he was severely wounded at Essling, and died in my arms at Vienna. Besides these, the marshal had two supernumerary officers attached to his staff, Captain Dagusan and Sub-lieutenant Le Couteulx de Canteleu.

On my joining the staff, Marshal Lannes warned me that he reckoned very much on my help, both on account of the report of me which he had received from Augereau and from the manner in which I had served under himself in the Friedland campaign. 'If you do not get killed,' said he, 'I will see that your promotion comes quickly.' The marshal never promised in vain, and he was in such high favour with the Emperor that everything was possible to him. I promised to do my duty with unswerving courage and zeal.

We left Bayonne and marched with the troops as far as the Ebro, where we joined King Joseph and the army which had made the recent campaign. Rest in camp life had given these young recruits a military air, which they had been far from having in the previous July. But what most raised their tone was finding themselves under the command of the Emperor in person, and hearing that the veterans of the

Grand Army had arrived. The Spaniards on their side were astonished and alarmed at the sight of the old grenadiers of the Grand Army, and realised that a change in the aspect of affairs was going to take place. And, indeed, hardly had the Emperor arrived on the Ebro when he launched numerous columns across the river. All that tried to make head against them were exterminated, or saved themselves only by a rapid flight. The Spaniards, however, astonished but not discouraged, rallied several army corps under the walls of Burgos, and made bold to accept battle. It took place on November 9 and did not last long, for the enemy, driven in at the first charge, fled in all directions, pursued by our cavalry, with heavy loss.

During this battle, a remarkable, and, happily, very uncommon incident occurred. Two young infantry lieutenants quarrelled, and fought a duel in front of their battalion under a storm of cannon-balls from the enemy. One of them had his cheek laid open by a sword-cut. The colonel put them under arrest and brought them before the marshal, who sent them to the citadel of Burgos, and reported them to the Emperor. He gave them a further punishment, forbidding them to go into action with their company for a month. At the end of this period the regiment to which these two foolish fellows belonged was being reviewed by the Emperor at Madrid. He ordered the colonel to present to him as usual those whom he proposed to promote in the place of officers killed. The sub-lieutenant, who had had the wound in his cheek, was an excellent soldier. His colonel thought that he ought not to lose his promotion for a fault which, though serious, was not dishonourable. He therefore submitted his name to the Emperor, who, perceiving a recent scar on the young man's face, remembered the duel at Burgos, and asked him in a severe tone, 'Where did you get that wound?' Thereupon the sub-lieutenant, wishing neither to tell a lie nor to confess, turned the difficulty very cleverly. Placing his finger on his cheek, he said, 'I got it *there*, sir.' The Emperor understood, and as he liked men of a ready wit, far from being angry at this original repartee, he smiled, and said to the officer, 'Your colonel proposes you for the rank of lieutenant; I grant it to you, but in future behave better or I shall cashier you.'

At Burgos I found my brother, who was on the staff of Prince[1]

[1] [Of Neuchatel. He acted usually as chief of the staff to Napoleon Like Junot, he died (in 1815) by a fall from a window; whether voluntary or not is uncertain.]

Berthier, chief of the general staff. Lannes' military talent increased every day, and the Emperor, who had a very high opinion of him, no longer gave him any stated command, wishing to keep him about his person and send him wherever things had got into disorder, being sure that he would quickly set them to rights. Thus, considering that he had left the town of Saragossa occupied by the insurgents of Aragon, and supported by the army of Castaños, which had conquered Dupont, and that old General Moncey was only bungling, Napoleon ordered Lannes to go to Logroño, take command of the Army of the Ebro, and attack Castaños. Thus Moncey came under the orders of Lannes. It was the first case in which one marshal of the Empire had commanded another. Lannes showed himself worthy of this mark of confidence and distinction. He started, accompanied by his staff alone, and we travelled by post. You must know that at this time there were no draught horses in Spain, but the post-houses kept the best nags in Europe. We rode therefore night and day, escorted from stage to stage by detachments of cavalry. In this way we went back as far as Miranda del Ebro, whence we reached Logroño, following the river. Marshal Moncey appeared much annoyed at finding himself, the senior marshal, placed under the orders of the junior, but he had no choice but to obey.

See what the presence of a single capable and energetic man can do. This army of recruits, which Moncey had not dared to lead against the enemy, were set in motion by Lannes on the day of his arrival, and marched against the enemy with ardour. We came up with him on the following day, the 23rd, in front of Tudela, and after three hours' fighting the conquerors of Baylen were driven in, beaten, completely routed, and fled headlong towards Saragossa, leaving thousands of dead on the field. We captured a great many men, several colours, and all the artillery; a complete victory. During this affair I had a bullet through my sabretache. Just at the outset I had had a lively quarrel with Labédoyère over the following matter. He had just bought a young and ill-broken horse, which at the sound of the cannon reared up and absolutely refused to go on. Labédoyère leapt off in a rage, drew his sword, and hamstrung the unhappy horse, who fell all bleeding on the grass, dragging himself along on his forefeet. I could not contain my indignation, and expressed it to him in strong terms; but Labédoyère took it very ill, and we should have come to blows had we not been

in the presence of the enemy. The report of this incident got about in the staff, and Marshal Lannes, very angry, declared that he would not have Labédoyère any more among his aides-de-camp. The latter, in despair, had seized his pistols to blow his brains out, when our friend De Viry pointed out to him that it would be more honourable to seek death in the ranks of the enemy than to inflict it on himself. Just at that moment, De Viry, who was near the marshal, was ordered to lead a cavalry regiment against the Spanish battery. Labédoyère joined the regiment as it was charging, and was one of the first to dash into the battery. It was carried and we saw De Viry and Labédoyère bringing back a gun which they had taken together. Neither of them was wounded, but Labédoyère had got a grapeshot through his busby, two inches from his head. The marshal was much touched by this courageous act; all the more so, that, after having handed over the gun to him, Labédoyère was getting ready to hurl himself a second time on the enemy's bayonets. The marshal held him back, and, pardoning his fault, restored him to his place on the staff. That same evening Labédoyère came in the most honourable way to shake hands with me, and we ever afterwards lived on the best of terms. He and De Viry were named in the despatches, and promoted to captains a little time after the battle.

CHAPTER XXXV.

I HAVE now reached one of the most terrible experiences of my military career. Marshal Lannes had just won a great victory, and the next day, after having received the reports of the generals, he wrote his despatch for one of our officers to take to the Emperor. Napoleon's practice was to give a step to the officer who brought him the news of an important success, and the marshals on their side entrusted such tasks to officers for whose speedy promotion they were anxious. It was a form of recommendation which Napoleon never failed to recognise. Marshal Lannes did me the honour of appointing me to carry the news of the victory of Tudela, and I could indulge the hope of being major before long. But, alas! I had yet much blood to lose before I reached that rank.

The high road from Bayonne to Madrid by Vittoria, Miranda del Ebro, Burgos, and Aranda forks off at Miranda from that leading to Saragossa by Logroño. A road from Tudela to Aranda across the mountains about Soria forms the third side of a great triangle. While Lannes was reaching Tudela the Emperor had advanced from Burgos to Aranda. It was, therefore, much shorter for me to go from Tudela to Aranda than by way of Miranda del Ebro. The latter road, however, had the advantage of being covered by the French armies; while the other, no doubt, would be full of Spanish fugitives who had taken refuge after Tudela in the mountains. The Emperor, however, had informed Lannes that he was sending Ney's corps direct from Aranda to Tudela; so, thinking Ney to be at no great distance, and that an advanced force which he had pushed on the day after the battle to get touch of him at Taragona would secure me from attack as far as Aranda, Lannes ordered me to take the shortest road. I may frankly admit that if I had had my choice I should have preferred to make the round by Miranda and Burgos; but the marshal's orders were positive, and how could I express any fear for my own person in the presence of a man who knew no more fear for others than he did for himself?

The duties of marshal's aide-de-camp in Spain were terrible. During the revolutionary wars the generals had couriers paid by the state to carry their despatches; but the Emperor, finding that these men were not capable of giving any intelligible account of what they had seen, did away with them, and ordered that in future despatches should be carried by aides-de-camp. This was all very well as long as we were at war among the good Germans, to whom it never occurred to attack a French messenger; but the Spaniards waged fierce war against them. This was of great advantage to the insurgents, for the contents of our despatches informed them of the movements of our armies. I do not think I am exaggerating when I say that more than 200 staff officers were killed or captured during the Peninsular War. One may regret the death of an ordinary courier, but it is less serious than the loss of a promising officer, who, moreover, is exposed to the risks of the battlefield in addition to those of a posting journey. A great number of vigorous men well skilled in their business begged to be allowed to do this duty, but the Emperor never consented.

Just as I was starting from Tudela, Major Saint-Mars hazarded a remark intended to dissuade Lannes from sending me over the mountains. The marshal, however, answered, 'Oh, he will meet Ney's advance guard to-night, and find troops echelonned all the way to the Emperor's head-quarters.' This was too decided for any opposition, so I left Tudela November 4, at nightfall, with a detachment of cavalry, and got without any trouble as far as Taragona, at the foot of the mountains. In this little town I found Lannes' advance guard. The officer in command, hearing nothing of Ney, had pushed an infantry post six leagues forward towards Agreda. But as this body was detached from its supports, it had been ordered to fall back on Taragona if the night passed without Ney's scouts appearing.

After Taragona there is no more high road. The way lies entirely over mountain paths covered with stones and splinters of rock. The officer commanding our advanced guard had, therefore, only infantry and a score of hussars of the 2nd (Chamborant) Regiment. He gave me a troop horse and two orderlies, and I went on my way in brilliant moonlight. When we had gone two or three leagues we heard several musket-shots, and bullets whistled close past us. We could not see the marksmen, who were hidden among the rocks. A little farther on we found the corpses of two French infantry soldiers, recently killed. They were entirely stripped, but their shakoes

were near them, by the numbers on which I could see that they belonged to one of the regiments in Ney's corps. Some little distance farther we saw a horrible sight. A young officer of the 10th Mounted Chasseurs, still wearing his uniform, was nailed by his hands and feet, head downwards, to a barn door. A small fire had been lighted beneath him. Happily, his tortures had been ended by death; but as the blood was still flowing from his wounds, it was clear that the murderers were not far off. I drew my sword; my two hussars handled their carbines. It was just as well that we were on our guard, for a few moments later seven or eight Spaniards, two of them mounted, fired upon us from behind a bush. We were none of us wounded, and my two hussars replied to the fire, and killed each his man. Then, drawing their swords, they dashed at the rest. I should have been very glad to follow them, but my horse had lost a shoe among the stones and was limping, so that I could not get him into a gallop. I was the more vexed because I feared that the hussars might let themselves be carried away in the pursuit and get killed in some ambush. I called them for five minutes; then I heard the voice of one of them saying, in a strong Alsatian accent, 'Ah! you thieves! you don't know the Chamborant Hussars yet. You shall see that they mean business.' My troopers had knocked over two more Spaniards, a Capuchin mounted on the horse of the poor lieutenant, whose haversack he had put over his own neck, and a peasant on a mule, with the clothes of the slaughtered soldiers on his back. It was quite clear that we had got the murderers. The Emperor had given strict orders that every Spanish civilian taken in arms should be shot on the spot; and, moreover, what could we do with these two brigands, who were already seriously wounded, and who had just killed three Frenchmen so barbarously? I moved on, therefore, so as not to witness the execution, and the hussars polished off the monk and the peasant, repeating, 'Ah, you don't know the Chamborant!' I could not understand how an officer and two privates of Ney's corps could be so near Taragona, when their regiments had not come that way; but most probably they had been captured elsewhere, and were being taken to Saragossa, when their escort learned the defeat of their countrymen at Tudela, and massacred their prisoners in revenge for it.

After this not very encouraging start I continued my journey. We had gone for some hours, when we saw a bivouac fire of the detachment belonging to the advance

guard which I had left at Taragona. The sub-lieutenant in command, having no tidings of Ney, was prepared to return to Taragona at daybreak, in pursuance of his orders. He knew that we were barely two leagues from Agreda, but did not know of which side that town was in possession. This was perplexing for me. The infantry detachment would return in a few hours, and if I went back with it, when it might be that in another league I should fall in with Ney's column, I should be giving a poor display of courage, and laying myself open to reproach from Lannes. On the other hand, if Ney was still a day or two's march away, it was almost certain that I should be murdered by the peasants of the mountains or by fugitive soldiers. What was more, I had to travel alone, for my two brave hussars had orders to return to Taragona when we had found the infantry detachment. No matter; I determined to push on; but then came the difficulty of finding a mount. There was no farm or village in this deserted place where I could procure a horse. That which I was riding was dead lame; and even if the hussars had been able, without incurring severe punishment, to lend me one of theirs, theirs were much fatigued. The horse that had belonged to the officer of chasseurs had received a bullet in the thigh during the fighting. There was only the peasant's mule left. This was a handsome beast, and according to the laws of war, belonged to the two hussars, who, no doubt, reckoned on selling her when they got back to the army. Still the good fellows made no demur about lending her to me, and put my saddle on her back. But the infernal beast, more accustomed to the pack than to the saddle, was so restive, that directly I tried to get her away from the group of horses and make her go alone, she fell to kicking, until I had to choose between being sent over a precipice and dismounting.

So I decided to set out on foot. After I had taken farewell of the infantry officer, this excellent young man, M. Tassin by name—he had been a friend of my poor brother Felix at the military school—came running after me, and said that he could not bear to let me thus expose myself all alone, and that though he had no orders, and his men were raw recruits, with little experience in war, he must send one with me, so that I might at least have a musket and some cartridges in case of an attack. We agreed that I should send the man back with Ney's corps; and I went off, with the soldier accompanying me. He was a slow-speaking Norman, with plenty of slyness under an appearance of good-nature. The Normans are for the most part brave,

as I learnt when I commanded the 23rd Chasseurs, where I had five or six hundred of them. Still, in order to know how far I could rely on my follower, I chatted with him as we went along, and asked if he would stand his ground if we were attacked. He said neither yes nor no, but answered, 'Well, zur, us shall zee.' Whence I inferred that when the moment of danger arrived my new companion was not unlikely to go and see how things were getting on in the rear.

The moon had just set, and as yet daylight had not appeared. It was pitch-dark, and at every step we stumbled over the great stones with which these mountain paths are covered. It was an unpleasant situation, but I hoped soon to come upon Ney's troops, and the fact of having seen the bodies of soldiers belonging to his corps increased the hope. So I went steadily on, listening for diversion to the Norman's stories of his country. Dawn appeared at last, and I saw the first houses of a large village. It was Agreda. I was alarmed at finding no outposts, for it showed that not only did no troops of the marshal's occupy the place, but that his army corps must be at least half a day further on. The map showed no village within five or six leagues of Agreda, and it was impossible that the regiments could be quartered in the mountains, far from any inhabited place. So I kept on my guard and before going any farther reconnoitred the position.

Agreda stands in a rather broad valley. It is built at the foot of a lofty hill, deeply escarped on both sides. The southern slope, which reaches the village, is planted with large vineyards. The ridge is rough and rocky, and the northern slope covered with thick coppice, a torrent flowing at the foot. Beyond are seen lofty mountains, uncultivated and uninhabited. The principal street of Agreda runs through the whole length of the place, with narrow lanes leading to the vineyards opening into it. As I entered the village I had these lanes and the vineyards on my right. This detail is important to the understanding of my story.

Everybody was asleep in Agreda; the moment was favourable for going through it. Besides, I had some hope—feeble, it is true—that when I reached the farther end I might perhaps see the fires of Marshal Ney's advance guard. So I went forward, sword in hand, bidding my soldier cock his musket. The main street was covered with a thick bed of damp leaves, which the people placed there to make manure; so that our footsteps made no sound, of which I was glad. I walked in the middle of the street, with the soldier on

my right; but, finding himself no doubt in a too conspicuous position, he gradually sheered off to the houses, keeping close to the walls so that he might be less visible in case of an attack, or better placed for reaching one of the lanes which open into the country. This showed me how little I could rely on the man; but I made no remark to him. The day was beginning to break. We passed the whole of the main street without meeting any one. Just as I was congratulating myself on reaching the last houses of the village, I found myself, at twenty-five paces' distance, face to face with four Royal Spanish Carabineers on horseback with drawn swords. Under any other circumstances I might have taken them for French gendarmes, their uniforms being exactly similar, but the gendarmes never march with the extreme advanced guard. These men, therefore, could not belong to Ney's corps, and I at once perceived they were the enemy. In a moment I faced about, but just as I had turned round to the direction from which I had come I saw a blade flash six inches from my face. I threw my head sharply back, but nevertheless got a severe sabre-cut on the forehead, of which I carry the scar over my left eyebrow to this day. The man who had wounded me was the corporal of the carabineers, who, having left his four troopers outside the village, had according to military practice gone forward to reconnoitre. That I had not met him was probably due to the fact that he had been in some side lane, while I had passed through the main street. He was now coming back through the street to rejoin his troopers, when, seeing me, he had come up noiselessly over a layer of leaves, and was just going to cleave my head from behind, when, by turning round, I presented to him my face and received his blow on my forehead. At the same moment the four carabineers, who seeing that their corporal was all ready for me had not stirred, trotted up to join him, and all five dashed upon me. I ran mechanically towards the houses on the right in order to get my back against a wall; but by good luck I found, two paces off, one of the steep and narrow lanes, which went up to the vineyards. The soldier had already reached it. I flew up there too, with the five carabineers after me; but at any rate they could not attack me all at once, for there was only room for one horse to pass. The brigadier went in front; the other four filed after him. My position, although not as unfavourable as it would have been in the street, where I should have been surrounded, still remained alarming; the blood flowing freely from my wound

had in a moment covered my left eye, with which I could not see at all, and I felt that it was coming towards my right eye, so that I was compelled by fear of getting blinded to keep my head bent over the left shoulder so as to bring the blood to that side. I could not staunch it, being obliged to defend myself against the corporal, who was cutting at me heavily. I parried as well as I could, going up backwards all the time. After getting rid of my scabbard and my busby, the weight of which hampered me, not daring to turn my head for fear of losing sight of my adversary, whose sword was crossed with mine, I told the light infantry man, whom I believed to be behind me, to place his musket on my shoulder, and fire at the Spanish corporal. Seeing no barrel, however, I leapt a pace back and turned my head quickly. Lo and behold, there was my scoundrel of a Norman soldier flying up the hill as fast as his legs would carry him. The corporal thereupon attacked with redoubled vigour, and, seeing that he could not reach me, made his horse rear, so that his feet struck me more than once on the breast. Luckily, as the ground went on rising the horse had no good hold with his hind legs, and every time that he came down again I landed a sword cut on his nose with such effect that the animal presently refused to rear at me any more. Then the brigadier, losing his temper, called out to the trooper behind him, 'Take your carbine: I will stoop down, and you can aim at the Frenchman over my shoulders.' I saw that this order was my death-signal; but as in order to execute it the trooper had to sheathe his sword and unhook his carbine, and that all this time the corporal never ceased thrusting at me, leaning right over his horse's neck, I determined on a desperate action, which would be either my salvation or my ruin. Keeping my eye fixed on the Spaniard, and seeing in his that he was on the point of again stooping over his horse to reach me, I did not move until the very instant when he was lowering the upper part of his body towards me; then I took a pace to the right, and leaning quickly over to that side, I avoided my adversary's blow, and plunged half my sword-blade into his left flank. With a fearful yell the corporal fell back on the croup of his horse; he would probably have fallen to the ground if the trooper behind him had not caught him in his arms. My rapid movement in stooping had caused the despatch which I was carrying to fall out of the pocket of my pelisse. I picked it up quickly, and at once hastened to the end of the lane where the vines began. There I turned round

and saw the carabineers busy round their wounded corporal, and apparently much embarrassed with him and with their horses in the steep and narrow passage.

This fight took less time than I have taken to relate it. Finding myself rid, at least for the moment, of my enemies, I went through the vines and reached the edge of the hill. Then I considered that it would be impossible for me to accomplish my errand and reach the Emperor at Aranda. I resolved, therefore, to return to Marshal Lannes, regaining first the place where I had left M. Tassin and his picket of infantry. I did not hope to find them still there; but at any rate the army which I had left the day before was in that direction. I looked for my soldier in vain, but I saw something that was of more use to me—a spring of clear water. I halted there a moment, and, tearing off a corner of my shirt, I made a compress which I fastened over my wound with my handkerchief. The blood spurting from my forehead had stained the despatches which I held in my hand, but I was too much occupied with my awkward position to mind that.

The agitations of the past night, my long walk over the stony paths in boots and spurs, the fight in which I had just been engaged, the pain in my head, and the loss of blood had exhausted my strength. I had taken no food since leaving Tudela, and here I had nothing but water to refresh myself with. I drank long draughts of it, and should have rested longer by the spring had I not perceived three of the Spanish carabineers riding out of Agreda and coming towards me through the vines. If they had been sharp enough to dismount and take off their long boots, they would probably have succeeded in reaching me; but their horses, unable to pass between the vinestocks, ascended the steep and rocky paths with difficulty. Indeed, when they reached the upper end of the vineyards they found themselves brought up by the great rocks, on the top of which I had taken refuge, and unable to climb any farther. Then the troopers, passing along the bottom of the rocks, marched parallel with me a long musket-shot off. They called to me to surrender, saying that as soldiers they would treat me as a prisoner of war, while if the peasants caught me I should infallibly be murdered. This reasoning was sound, and I admit that if I had not been charged with despatches for the Emperor, I was so exhausted that I should perhaps have surrendered.

However, wishing to preserve to the best of my ability the precious charge which had been entrusted to me, I marched on

without answering. Then the three troopers, taking their carbines, opened fire upon me. Their bullets struck the rocks at my feet but none touched me, the distance being too great for a correct aim. I was alarmed, not at the fire, but at the notion that the reports would probably attract the peasants who would be going to their work in the morning, and quite expected to be attacked by these fierce mountaineers. My presentiment seemed to be verified, for I perceived some fifteen men half a league away in the valley advancing towards me at a run. They held in their hands something that flashed in the sun. I made no doubt that they were peasants armed with their spades, and that it was the iron of these that shone thus. I gave myself up for lost, and in my despair I was on the point of letting myself slide down over the rocks on the north side of the hill to the torrent, crossing it as best I could, and hiding myself in some chasm of the great mountains which arose on the farther side of the gorge. Then, if I was not discovered, and if I still had the strength, I should set out when night came in the direction of Taragona.

This plan, though offering many chances of failure, was my last hope. Just as I was about to put it into execution, I perceived that the three carabineers had given up firing on me, and gone forward to reconnoitre the group which I had taken for peasants. At their approach the iron instruments which I had taken for spades or mattocks were lowered, and I had the inexpressible joy of seeing a volley fired at the Spanish carabineers. Instantly turning, they took flight towards Agreda, as it seemed, with two of their number wounded. 'The newcomers, then, are French!' I exclaimed. 'Here goes to meet them!' and, regaining a little strength from the joy of being delivered, I descended, leaning on my sword. The French had caught sight of me; they climbed the hill, and I found myself in the arms of the brave Lieutenant Tassin.

This providential rescue had come about as follows. The soldier who had deserted me while I was engaged with the carabineers in the streets of Agreda had quickly reached the vines; thence, leaping across the vinestocks, ditches, rocks, and hedges, he had very quickly run the two leagues which lay between him and the place where we had left M. Tassin's picket. The detachment was on the point of starting for Taragona, and was eating its soup, when my Norman came up all out of breath. Not wishing, however, to lose a mouthful, he seated himself by a cooking-pot and began to make a very tranquil breakfast, without saying a word about what had happened at

Agreda. By great good luck he was noticed by M. Tassin, who, surprised at seeing him returned, asked him where he had quitted the officer whom he had been told off to escort. 'Good Lord, sir,' replied the Norman, 'I left him in that big village with his head half split open, and fighting with Spanish troopers, and they were cutting away at him with their swords like anything.' At these words Lieutenant Tassin ordered his detachment to arms, picked the fifteen most active, and went off at the double towards Agreda. The little troop had gone a league when they heard shots, and inferred from them that I was still alive but in urgent need of succour. Stimulated by the hope of saving me, the brave fellows doubled their pace, and finally perceived me on the ridge of the hill, serving as a mark for three Spanish troopers.

M. Tassin and his men were tired, and I was at the end of my strength. We halted, therefore, for a little, and meanwhile you may imagine that I expressed my warmest gratitude to the lieutenant and his men, who were almost as glad as I was. We returned to the bivouac where M. Tassin had left the rest of his people. The *cantinière* of the company was there with her mule carrying two skins of wine, bread, and ham. I bought the lot and gave them to the soldiers, and we breakfasted, as I was very glad to do, the two hussars whom I had left there the night before sharing in the meal. One of these mounted the monk's mule and lent me his horse, and so we set out for Taragona. I was in horrible pain, because the blood had hardened over my wound. At Taragona I rejoined Lannes' advance guard; the general in command had my wound dressed, and gave me a horse and an escort of two hussars. I reached Tudela at midnight, and was at once received by the marshal, who, though ill himself, seemed much touched by my misfortune. It was necessary, however, that the despatch about the battle of Tudela should be promptly forwarded to the Emperor, who must be impatiently awaiting news from the army on the Ebro. Enlightened by what had befallen me in the mountains, the marshal consented that the officer bearing it should go by Miranda and Burgos, where the presence of French troops on the roads made the way perfectly safe. I should have liked very much to be the bearer, but I was in such pain and so tired that it would have been physically impossible for me to ride hard. The marshal therefore entrusted the duty to his brother-in-law, Major Guéhéneuc. I handed him the despatches stained with my blood. Major Saint-Mars, the secretary, wished to re-copy them and change the envelope. 'No,

no,' cried the marshal, 'the Emperor ought to see how valiantly Captain Marbot has defended them.' So he sent off the packet just as it was, adding a note to explain the reason of the delay, eulogising me, and asking for a reward to Lieutenant Tassin and his men, who had hastened so zealously to my succour, without reckoning the danger to which they might have been exposed if the enemy had been in force.

The Emperor did, as a matter of fact, a little while after, grant the Cross both to M. Tassin and to his sergeant, and a gratuity of 100 francs to each of the men who had accompanied them. As for the Norman soldier, he was tried by court martial for deserting his post in the presence of the enemy, and condemned to drag a shot for two years, and to finish his time of service in a pioneer company.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

LANNES advanced to Saragossa; but, having no siege artillery, he was content for the moment to guard the principal approaches, and, leaving Marshal Moncey in command, went to rejoin the Emperor. Being, as I have said, ill, he was obliged to travel in a carriage, relays being furnished by the draught-horses of the army. I anticipated a disagreeable journey; for though we should halt at night, seven or eight hours' riding would increase the pain of my wound, already severe.

But the marshal kindly gave me a place in his carriage, together with his friends Generals Pouzet and Frère. They were fond of chatting, and at times of joking at the expense of their friends, and as they had only known me a short time my presence embarrassed them. But the marshal said, 'He is a good lad; you can talk before him,' and they took advantage freely of his opinion. Although we rested at night, I found the journey very fatiguing. We passed Logroño, Miranda, and Burgos, and went on foot up the celebrated gorge of Somo Sierra, which had been carried a few days before, under the Emperor's eyes, by the Polish lancers of his guard. It was in this fight that General Montbrun, who afterwards became famous, distinguished himself. He was with the head-quarter staff, when the Emperor, who had got some hours in advance of his infantry, reached the foot of Somo Sierra, having only his Polish lancers with him. The high road, at that point very steep, and closed in by mountains, was found to be barred by a small earthwork defended by several thousand Spaniards. Napoleon wished to reach Buitrago that day, so, finding his march arrested, and judging that the infantry could not come in for some time, he ordered the Poles to force the passage.

The Poles have only one good quality, but that they possess in the fullest measure—they are very brave. Their commanders, having seen no service, did not know that in passing a defile it is necessary to leave a squadron's distance between every two squadrons, so that if the leaders are repulsed they may find in the rear of them an open space in which to re-form and not be driven back upon the squadrons following. The Polish officers therefore launched their

regiment into the defile without getting them into a proper formation. Received with a hail of bullets on both flanks, and finding the road barred at the highest point, they suffered considerable loss, increased by the way in which the first squadron fell back in disorder upon the second, the second on the third, and so on, until the regiment, now only a disorganised crowd on an enclosed road, could not wheel about, and was being shot down at almost point-blank range by the Spaniards posted on the rocks. It was difficult to disentangle this mass; when it was at last managed the Poles re-formed in the plain, under the Emperor's eyes. He praised their courage, but blamed their lack of method in attacking. The officers admitted it, and expressed their regret that they had not been led by an experienced general. Then Berthier, wishing to do a good turn to Montbrun, who was out of favour at the moment, but whom he knew to be an excellent cavalry officer, drew Napoleon's attention to his presence. The Emperor called him, and put him in command of the lancers, with orders to renew the attack.

Montbrun was a splendid man, in the same style as Murat; lofty stature, a scarred face, a black beard, of soldierly bearing, and an admirable horseman. The Poles took to him, and promised to follow his instructions; and Montbrun, having made the squadrons take their intervals, and seeing that everything was in proper order, placed himself boldly at their head and dashed into the gorge. Some squadrons were at first shaken by the fire, but as the different parts of the column were at sufficient distance to prevent any serious disorder, they recovered, and presently the top of the ascent was reached. General Montbrun dismounted, and was the first to run up to the entrenchments to tear out the palisades under a hail of bullets. The Poles followed his example; the entrenchments were carried and the regiment, remounting, charged the Spaniards, with great slaughter, for the ground, opening out and sloping down, allowed the lancers to reach the enemy's infantry as they fled in disorder. By the time the Emperor reached the top, not only was the French flag to be seen floating over Buitrago, but Montbrun's cavalry was pursuing the routed Spaniards a league beyond the town. That evening Napoleon complimented the Poles, and appointed Montbrun general of division. He commanded a division soon after in Austria, and in 1810 was put in chief command of all the cavalry of the Army of Portugal. He was killed at the battle of the Moskwa.

When Lannes had examined the position we descended

to Buitrago, and the next day reached Madrid, which had been occupied by Napoleon only after serious fighting. Lannes presented me to him, and he received me kindly, promising to reward me ere long for my conduct at Agreda. We found M. Guéhéneuc at Madrid in the uniform of a colonel, having been promoted by the Emperor on delivering the despatch stained with my blood. Guéhéneuc was a good fellow; he came to me and said, 'You had the danger, and got the sword-cut, and I have got the step; but I hope that your promotion will not be slow in coming.' I hoped so too; but I will frankly admit that I was a little annoyed with the marshal for the obstinacy with which he had insisted on making me go by Agreda. However, one must submit to one's destiny. Marshal Lannes lodged at Madrid in the same house as Murat had occupied. I found that the kind Señor Hernandez, hearing of my arrival, had come to ask me to stay with him. I was the more glad to accept, since my wound had got poisoned, and good nursing was necessary. This my host gave me in plenty, and I was on the way to get well, when new events compelled me to return to the field.

We had been barely a week at Madrid, when the Emperor learnt, on December 21, that the Portuguese army was daring to march against the Spanish capital, and was only at a few days' distance. Orders were instantly given to march, and he left the town at the head of several army corps, going towards Valladolid, from which direction the English, under Sir John Moore, were expected. Marshal Lannes, being quite recovered, was to accompany the Emperor on horseback. He suggested to me that I should stay at Madrid till my wound was completely healed; but there were two reasons against this. In the first place, I wished to be present at the battle with the English; and secondly, I knew that the Emperor scarcely ever promoted people in their absence, and I was anxious to obtain the promised step to major, so I got ready to start. The only thing that troubled me was that by reason of my wound I could wear neither cocked hat nor busby. The handkerchief bound round my head was not quite a sufficiently military head-gear to appear among a staff closely attached to that of the Emperor. The sight of a Mameluke of the guard with his turban and red fez gave me an idea. I had a cap of the same colour; round this I wound a smart silk handkerchief, and placed the whole over my bandages.

We marched the first night to the foot of the Guadarrama. There was a sharp frost, and the ice on the roads caused the

troops — the cavalry especially — to march with difficulty. The marshal constantly sent officers to see that the column was in good order, but kindly exempted me from this duty. While our colleagues were carrying orders N—— and I were often alone with the marshal. N—— beckoned to me and held out a bottle of kirsch. I declined, with thanks; my friend put the neck of the bottle into his mouth, and in less than a quarter of an hour had emptied it. Suddenly, like a Colossus overthrown, he rolled to the ground. The marshal broke out angrily, but N—— replied, 'It is not my fault; there is ice between my saddle and my seat!' At this novel and quaint excuse, in spite of his wrath, the marshal could not help laughing. Then he said to me, 'Put him into one of the provision wagons.' I obeyed, and our comrade went to sleep on the sacks of rice, all among the hams and saucepans.

Next day a furious snowstorm, with a fierce wind, made the passage of the mountains almost impracticable. Men and horses were hurled over precipices. The leading battalions had actually begun to retreat; but Napoleon was resolved to overtake the English at all costs. He spoke to the men, and ordered that the members of each section should hold one another by the arm. The cavalry, dismounting, did the same. The staff was formed in similar fashion, the Emperor between Lannes and Duroc, we following with locked arms; and so, in spite of wind, snow, and ice, we proceeded, though it took us four hours to reach the top. Half-way up the marshals and generals, who wore jackboots, could go no further. Napoleon, therefore, got hoisted on to a gun, and bestrode it; the marshals and generals did the same; and in this grotesque order they reached the convent at the summit. There the troops were rested, and wine served out. The descent, though awkward, was better. At nightfall we reached the market town of San Rafael, and obtained food and quarters there and in the villages round. My wound had reopened, the snow had got down my neck, and I was wet through: so I passed a wretched night enough.

As we continued our march on the following days we came into milder weather. Rain took the place of frost, and the roads became quagmires. At Tordesillas we came up with some stragglers of the English army, which at our approach were retreating towards the port of Corunna. Anxious to catch it before it could embark, the Emperor forced on the troops, making them do ten or twelve leagues a day. This haste was the cause of a check which Napoleon felt all the

more from the fact that it was inflicted on a division of his guard.

When the army was at Villapanda, where it passed the night, the Emperor—who by this time was furious at the protracted pursuit of the English — heard that their rear-guard was only a few leagues from us, at the town of Benavente, beyond the little stream of the Esla. At daybreak he sent forward a column of infantry, with cavalry of the guard, under the command of General Lefebvre-Desnouettes, a brave but somewhat imprudent officer. On reaching with his cavalry the banks of the Esla, the general could see no enemy, and proposed to reconnoitre the town of Benavente, half a league beyond the stream. This was all right; but a picket would have sufficed, for twenty-five men can see as far as two thousand, and if they fall into an ambush the loss is less serious. General Desnouettes should, therefore, have awaited his infantry before plunging recklessly into the Esla. But without listening to any suggestion, he made the whole regiment of chasseurs ford the river, and advanced towards the town, which he ordered the Mamelukes to search. They found not a soul in the place, a pretty certain sign that the enemy was preparing an ambush. The French general ought in prudence to have drawn back, since he was not in sufficient force to fight a strong rear-guard. Instead of this, Desnouettes pushed steadily forward; but as he was going through the town, four thousand or five thousand English cavalry[1] turned it, covered by the houses in the suburbs, and suddenly charged down upon the chasseurs. These, hastening from the town, made so valiant a defence that they cut a great gap through the English, regained the stream, and recrossed without much loss. But when, on reaching the left bank, the regiment re-formed, it was seen that General Desnouettes was no longer present. A messenger came with a flag of truce announcing that the general's horse had been killed in the fight, and he himself was a prisoner of war.[2]

At this moment the Emperor came up. Imagine his wrath at hearing that, not only had his favourite regiment undergone a repulse, but that the commander had remained in the hands of the English! Though much displeased with Desnouettes' imprudence, he proposed to the commander on the other side to exchange him against an officer of the same rank among those detained in France; but General Moore was too proud of

[1] [The total number of cavalry fit for duty in Moore's army was 2,278.]
[2] [Napier, book iv. chap. 4.]

being able to show to the English people one of the commanders of the imperial guard of France to agree to this exchange, and, consequently, declined it. General Desnouettes was treated with much kindness, but was sent to London as a trophy, which made Napoleon all the more angry.

In spite of this little victory, the English continued their retreat. We crossed the Esla, and occupied Benavente. From this town to Astorga the distance is not less than fifteen or sixteen leagues, with several streams to be crossed; but the Emperor was in such a hurry to overtake the enemy that he required his army to march this distance in one day, though it was the 31st of December and the days were very short. Seldom have I made such a fatiguing march. An icy rain wetted us to the skin; men and horses sank into the marshy ground. We only advanced with the utmost effort; and as all the bridges had been broken by the English, our men were five or six times compelled to strip, place their arms and clothes on their heads, and go naked through the icy water of the streams.

It is painful to relate that I saw three veteran grenadiers of the guard, unable to march any further, and, unwilling to fall to the rear at the risk of being tortured and massacred by the peasants, blow out their brains with their own muskets. A dark and rainy night added to the fatigue of the troops; the exhausted soldiers lay down in the mud. A great number halted at the village of Bañeza; only the leading companies arrived at Astorga, the rest remaining on the road. It was late at night when the Emperor and Lannes, escorted only by their staffs and some hundred cavalry, entered Astorga. So tired and anxious for shelter and warmth was everyone that the place was scarcely searched. If the enemy had had warning of this and returned on their tracks, they might perhaps have carried off the Emperor; fortunately they were in too great a hurry, and we did not find one of them in the town. Every minute fresh bodies of French troops were coming up; and the safety of the imperial head-quarters was soon secured.

Astorga is a largish town. We quartered ourselves quickly, placing Marshal Lannes in a handsome house near the Emperor. We were wet through, and near enough to the Asturian mountains to be cold. Our baggage had not yet come up, and the fires which we lighted could not keep the marshal from shivering. I got him to take off all his clothes, roll himself in a woollen rug, and put himself between two mattresses. The houses being well furnished with beds, we all did the like; and in this fashion we saw the year 1808 out.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

New Year's Day 1809 was passed at Astorga. The weather continued bad, and it was necessary to allow the army to come together. Food was plentiful, and as there was not an inhabitant in the place we were all the freer to make the most of it. The suicide of the three grenadiers had affected the Emperor keenly; and in spite of rain and wind he visited all the men's quarters, talking to them and restoring their *moral*. All were awaiting the order to start next day in pursuit of the English, when an aide-de-camp from the Minister of War arrived bringing despatches which decided Napoleon to go no further in person. Doubtless it was the news of the hostile movements which Austria was beginning to make, in order to attack the French Empire while Napoleon and a part of the Grand Army were far away in Spain. The Emperor then resolved to return to France to prepare for this new war with the Austrians; but not wishing to lose the chance of chastising the English, he ordered Ney and Soult to pursue. They set out, their troops marching past the Emperor.

The English troops are excellent; but as they are only raised by voluntary enlistment, and as this becomes difficult in time of war, they are forced to admit married men, who are allowed to be accompanied by their families. Consequently the regiments took along with them a great number of women and children; a serious disadvantage which Great Britain has never been able to remedy. Thus, just as the corps of Soult and Ney were marching past the Emperor outside Astorga, cries were heard from a great barn. The door was opened, and it was found to contain 1,000 to 1,200 English women and children, who, exhausted by the long march of the previous days through rain, mud, and streams, were unable to keep up with the army and had taken refuge in this place. For forty-eight hours they had lived on raw barley. Most of the women and children were good-looking, in spite of the muddy rags in which they were clad. They flocked round the Emperor, who was touched by their misery, and gave them lodging and food in the town; sending a flag of truce to let the English general know that when the weather permitted they would be sent back to him.

Marshal Soult came up with the enemy in the mountains of Leon and beat his rear-guard at Villafranca, where we lost General Colbert and his aide-de-camp Latour-Maubourg.

The English army reached the port of Corunna after a hasty march, but a terrible storm made its embarkation very difficult, and it was compelled to give battle to Marshal Soult's troops who were close on its heels. The commander-in-chief, Sir John Moore, was killed, and his army only succeeded in reaching its vessels after immense loss.[1] This event, which the French regarded at first as an advantage, turned out unlucky, for General Moore was replaced by Wellington, who afterwards did us so much harm.

At Astorga my brother, who was on Berthier's staff, was captured by guerillas when on his way to Madrid with despatches. I shall have more to say about this.

While Soult was pursuing the retreating enemy towards Corunna, the Emperor, accompanied by Marshal Lannes, went back to Valladolid to get on the road to France. He stayed two days in that town, ordering Lannes to go and take command of the two corps that were besieging Saragossa, and after taking that place to rejoin him at Paris. But before leaving us, the Emperor, wishing to show his satisfaction with Lannes' staff, invited the marshal to hand in a scheme of recommendations for promotion with regard to his officers. I was entered for the rank of major and quite expected to get it, especially when I heard that the marshal on leaving the Emperor's study had asked for me. But my hopes were cruelly overthrown. The marshal said to me kindly that when he was asking for a step for me, he thought he ought also to recommend his old friend Captain Dagusan, but that the Emperor had begged him to choose between Dagusan and me. 'I cannot make up my mind,' said the marshal, 'for the wound which you received at Agreda and your behaviour in that difficult business put the right on your side; but Dagusan is old, and is making his last campaign. Still I would not commit an injustice for the world, and I leave it to you to settle which of the two names I shall have entered on the commission which the Emperor is about to sign.' It was an embarrassing position for me; my heart was very full. However, I answered that he must put M. Dagusan's name on the commission. The marshal embraced me with tears in his eyes, promising that after the siege of Saragossa I should certainly get my step. That evening the marshal called his officers together to announce the promo-

[1] [English loss at the battle of Corunna about 800, French about 3,000. During the entire advance and retreat Moore lost about 4,000 men, one-sixth of his total force.]

tions. Guéhéneuc had his colonelcy confirmed, Saint-Mars was appointed lieutenant-colonel, Dagusan major, D'Albuquerque and Watteville got the Legion of Honour, De Viry and Labédoyère were captains; I got nothing.

Next day we left Valladolid, riding by short stages to Saragossa. Lannes took the command of the whole besieging force to the number of 30,000 men, who were under the orders of Marshal Mortier, Junot replacing Moncey.

Before the great insurrection which followed the captivity of Ferdinand VII., the town of Saragossa had been unfortified, but on learning what had happened at Bayonne, and the violence which Napoleon was doing in Spain in placing his brother Joseph on the throne, Saragossa gave the signal for resistance. Its population rose as one man; monks, women, and children took up arms. The town was surrounded by immense and solidly-built convents; these were fortified, and guns placed in them. All the houses were loopholed, and the streets barricaded; powder, cannon-balls, and bullets were manufactured, and great stores of food collected. All the inhabitants enrolled themselves, and took as their commander Count Palafox, one of the colonels of the body-guard and a devoted friend of Ferdinand, whom he had followed to Bayonne, returning to Aragon after the King's arrest. It was during the summer of 1808 that the Emperor heard of the revolt, and the intention to defend Saragossa, but, being still under the delusion to which Murat's despatches had given rise, he regarded the insurrection as a fire of straw which the presence of a few French regiments would put out. Still before employing force he thought to try persuasion. He applied to Prince Pignatelli, the greatest Aragonese noble, who was then in Paris, begging him to use his influence in the province to calm the excitement. Prince Pignatelli accepted this pacific duty, and went to Saragossa. The people ran to meet him, not doubting but that like Palafox he was come to fight the French. But no sooner had he spoken of submission than he was assailed by the mob, who would have hanged him if Palafox had not put him in a dungeon, where he remained eight or nine months.

Meanwhile, several French divisions under General Verdier appeared in June before Saragossa. The fortifications were still incomplete, and an attempt was made to carry the place by assault. But no sooner were our columns in the streets than a murderous fire from windows, towers, roofs, and cellars caused them such losses that they were obliged to retreat. Then our troops surrounded the place, and began a more

methodical siege. This would probably have succeeded, had not King Joseph's retreat compelled the army before Saragossa to retreat, also abandoning part of their artillery.

The first siege thus failed, but when our troops had returned to Aragon victorious, the marshal came in 1809 to attack Saragossa afresh. The town was by this time in a much better state of defence, for the fortifications were completed, and all the warlike population of Aragon had thrown itself into the place. The garrison had been further strengthened by a large part of the army of Castaños, which we had beaten at Tudela, so that Saragossa was defended by more than 80,000 men, while the marshal had only 30,000 with which to besiege it. But our officers were excellent, order and discipline reigned in the ranks, while in the town all was inexperience and confusion. The besieged only agreed on one point—to defend themselves to the death. The peasants were the most determined; they had entered the town with their wives, their children, and even their herds, and each party of them had a quarter of the town or a house assigned to it for its dwelling-place, which they were sworn to defend. The people lived mixed up with their beasts in the most disgusting state of filth, the entrails of slaughtered animals lay about in the courtyards and in the rooms, and the besieged did not even take the trouble to remove the bodies of men who had died in consequence of the epidemic which this carelessness speedily developed. Religious fanaticism and the sacred love of country exalted their courage, and they blindly resigned themselves to the will of God. The Spaniards have preserved much of the Arab character; they are fatalists constantly repeating, 'Lo que ha de ser no puede faltar' ('That which is to be cannot fail'). Accordingly they took no precaution.

To attack such men by assault in a town where every house was a fortress would have been to repeat the mistake committed during the first siege, and to incur heavy losses without a chance of success. Accordingly, Marshal Lannes and General Lacoste, the commanding engineer, adopted a prudent method, which, though tedious, was the best way to bring about the surrender or destruction of the town. They began in the usual way by opening trenches, until the first houses were reached, then the houses were mined and blown up, defenders and all; then the next were mined, and so on. These works, however, involved considerable danger for the French, for as soon as one showed himself he was a mark to musket-shots from the Spaniards in the neighbouring buildings. General Lacoste fell in this way, at the moment when he was taking his

place in front of a window to examine the interior of the town. Such was the determination of the Spaniards that while a house was being mined, and the dull sound of the rammer warned them that death was at hand, not one left the house which he had sworn to defend. We could hear them singing litanies, then at the moment when the walls flew into the air, and fell back with a crash, crushing the greater part of them, those who had escaped would collect about the ruins, and sheltering themselves behind the slightest cover would recommence their sharpshooting. Our soldiers, however, warned of the moment when the mine was going off, held themselves in readiness, and no sooner had the explosion taken place than they dashed on to the ruins, and, after killing all whom they found, established themselves behind bits of wall, threw up entrenchments with furniture and beams, and in the middle of the ruins constructed passages for the sappers who were going to mine the next house. In this way a good third of the town was destroyed, and the passages established among the ruins formed an inextricable labyrinth, through which one could only find one's way by the help of stakes which the engineer officers placed. Besides the mines, the French used artillery freely, and threw 11,000 shells into the town.

In spite of all Saragossa still held out. In vain did the marshal, touched by the heroism of the defence, send a flag of truce to propose a capitulation. It was refused, and the siege continued. The huge fortified convents could not be destroyed, like the houses, by mining; we, therefore, merely blew up a piece of their thick walls, and when the breach was made sent forward a column to the assault. The besieged would flock to the defence, and in the terrible fighting which resulted from these attacks we suffered our principal losses.

The best fortified convents were those of the Inquisition and of Santa Engracia. A mine had just been completed under the latter when the marshal, sending for me in the middle of the night, told me that in order to hasten my promotion to the rank of major he designed for me a most important duty. 'At daybreak,' said he, 'the mine which is to breach the wall of Santa Engracia will be fired. Eight companies of grenadiers are to assault; I have given orders that the captains should be chosen from those junior to you; I give you the command of the column. Carry the convent, and I feel certain that one of the first messengers from Paris will bring your commission as major.' I accepted with gratitude, though suffering at the moment a good deal from

my wound. The flesh in cicatrising had formed a lump which prevented me from wearing military head-gear, so Dr. Assalagny, the surgeon-major of the chasseurs, had reduced it with lunar caustic. This painful operation had been performed the day before; I had been feverish all night, and consequently was not in very good condition for leading an assault. No matter; there was no room for hesitation, and I can admit, too, that I was exceedingly proud of the command entrusted to me. Eight companies of grenadiers to a mere captain was magnificent.

I hastened to get ready, and as day dawned I went to the trenches. There I found General Rasout, who, after having handed over the command of the grenadiers to me, observed that, as the mine could not be fired for an hour, I should do well to use this time in examining the wall which was to be blown up, and in calculating the width of the resulting breach so as to arrange my attack. I started, with an adjutant of engineers to show me the way, through the ruins of a whole quarter which had already been thrown down. Finally, I reached the foot of the convent wall where the territory conquered by us came to an end. I found myself in a little court; a light infantry picket, which occupied a sort of cellar hard by, had a sentry in this court, who was sheltered from musket-shots by a heap of planks and doors. The engineer officer, showing me a thick wall in front of us, said that was the one which was to be blown up. In one of the corners of the court, whence a pump had been torn away, some stones had fallen out, and left a gap. The sentry showed me that by stooping down one could see through this opening the legs of a stormy force of the enemy posted in the convent garden. In order to verify his statement and notice the lie of the ground on which I was going to fight, I stooped down. At that moment a Spaniard posted on the tower of Santa Engracia fired a shot at me, and I fell on the stones.

I felt no pain at first, and thought that the adjutant standing by me had inadvertently given me a push. Presently, however, the blood flowed copiously; I had got a bullet in the left side very near the heart. The adjutant helped me to rise, and we went into the cellar where the soldiers were. I was losing so much blood that I was on the point of fainting. There were no stretchers, so the soldiers passed a musket under my arms, another under my knees, and thus carried me through the thousand-and-one passages which had been made through the débris of this quarter to the place where I had left General Rasout. There I recovered my senses. The general wished to

have me attended to, but I preferred to be under Dr. Assalagny, so, pressing my handkerchief on the wound, I had myself taken to Marshal Lannes' head-quarters, a cannon-shot from the town.

When they saw me arrive, all covered with blood, carried by soldiers, one of whom was supporting my head, the marshal and my comrades thought I was dead. Dr. Assalagny assured them to the contrary, and hastened to dress my wound. The difficulty was where to put me, for, as all the furniture of the establishment had been burnt during the siege, there was not a bed in the place. We used to sleep on the bricks wherewith the rooms were paved. The marshal and all my comrades at once gave their cloaks: these were piled up, and I was laid on them. The doctor examined my wound, and found that I had been struck by a projectile which must have been flat because it had passed between two ribs without breaking them, which an ordinary bullet would not have done. To find the object Assalagny put a probe into the wound, but when he found nothing his face grew anxious. Finding that I complained of severe pain in the loins, he turned me on my face, and examined my back. Hardly had he touched the spot where the ribs are connected with the spine than I involuntarily gave a cry. The projectile was there. Assalagny then took a knife, made a large incision, perceived the metallic body showing between two ribs and tried to extract it with the forceps. He did not, however, succeed, though his violent efforts lifted me up, until he made one of my comrades sit on my shoulders, and another on my legs. At length he succeeded in extracting a lead bullet of the largest calibre. The Spaniards had hammered it flat till it had the shape of a half-crown, a cross was scratched on each face, and small notches all round gave it the appearance of the wheel of a watch. It was these teeth which had caught in the muscles, and rendered the extraction so difficult. Thus crushed out, the ball presented too large a surface to enter a musket, and must have been fired from a blunderbus. Striking edgewise, it had acted like a cutting instrument, passed between two ribs, and travelled round the interior of the chest to make its exit in the same way as its entry, fortunately preserving sufficient force to make its way through the muscles of the back. The marshal, wishing to let the Emperor know with what fanatical determination the inhabitants of Saragossa were defending themselves, sent him the bullet extracted from my body. Napoleon, after examining it, had it brought to my mother, at the same time announcing to her that I was about to be promoted to major.

Assalagny was one of the first surgeons of the day, and, thanks to him, my wound, which might have been mortal, was a case of rapid cure. The marshal had a folding bedstead which he took on campaign. This he lent me, with mattress and sheets; my valise served me for pillow, my cloak for blankets. Still, I was not well off, for my room had neither door nor window, and wind and rain entered. The ground floor of the house, too, was used for a hospital, the sounds and odours of which reached my room; more than two hundred sutlers had set up their booths round the head-quarters. The camp was close by; so that there was eternal singing, shouting, drumming, and the bass to this fiendish concert was supplied by numerous cannon, booming night and day. I got no sleep; but at the end of a fortnight my vigorous constitution got the upper hand, and I was able to leave my bed.

The climate being mild, I was also able to take short walks, leaning on the arm of Dr. Assalagny or my friend, De Viry; but their duties did not allow of their staying with me long, and I suffered much from ennui. One day my servant came in to say that an old hussar, with tears streaming down his face, was asking to see me. As you will guess, it was my old tutor, Sergeant Pertelay. His regiment had just come to Spain, and hearing that I had been wounded, he came straight to me. I was glad to see the good man again, and gave him a cordial greeting. After this he often came to visit me, and divert me by his interminable yarns and the quaint advice which he still thought himself entitled to give me. My convalescence did not last long, and by March 15 I was nearly well, though weak.

Typhus, famine, fire, and sword had destroyed nearly a third of the inhabitants and garrison of Saragossa, and still no thought of surrender entered the minds of the survivors. The principal forts had been taken, and the mines had destroyed a very large portion of the town. The monks had persuaded the poor folk that the French would massacre them, and none dared come out. Good luck and Lannes' kindness at last put an end to this memorable siege. On March 20 the French carried a nunnery by assault. Besides the nuns, they found three hundred women of all classes who had taken refuge in the church. They were treated with respect, and brought to the marshal. The poor creatures, having been surrounded for several days, had received no food, and were famishing. Lannes led them himself to the camp market, where, summoning the carabineers, he ordered them to bring food for the women, making

himself responsible for payment. Nor did his generosity stop there; he had them all taken back to Saragossa. On their return the inhabitants, who had followed their movements from roofs and towers, rushed forward to hear their adventures. They all spoke well of the French marshal and soldiers, and from that moment the excitement subsided and a surrender was decided upon. That evening Saragossa capitulated.

Lannes' first condition was, that Prince Fuentes-Pignatelli should be given up to him alive. The poor man arrived escorted by a savage-looking gaoler with pistols in his sash, who had the impudence to bring him to the marshal's room, demanding a receipt from the hand of the French commander-in-chief. The marshal had him turned out; but as the man would not go without his receipt, Labédoyère, never very patient, lost his temper, and literally kicked him downstairs. As for Prince Pignatelli, he was indeed a painful sight, owing to his sufferings in prison. He was devoured by fever, and we had not a bed to offer him; for, as I have said, the marshal was lodging in a house utterly unfurnished, the sole advantage of which was that it lay near the point of attack. Junot meanwhile, being less conscientious, had established himself a league away in a rich convent, where he lived very comfortably. He offered hospitality to the prince, who, fatally for himself, accepted it. Junot gave him such a 'blow-out' that his stomach, undermined by prison diet, gave way under the sudden change, and Prince Pignatelli died just as he was restored to freedom and happiness. He left an income of more than 900,000 francs to a collateral relation who had hardly a farthing.

When a place capitulates it is usual for the officers to retain their swords. This practice was followed at Saragossa, except in the case of the governor, Palafox, touching whom the marshal had received special instructions from the Emperor, on the following grounds:—

Count Palafox, a devoted friend of Ferdinand, had followed him to Bayonne. Thrown into consternation by the abdication of that prince and his father, the Spanish grandees summoned by Napoleon to a national assembly, finding themselves in France and in Napoleon's power, for the most part recognised Joseph as their king. Palafox, it appears, under the same pressure, did the same; but hardly had he returned to Spain when he promptly protested against the moral violence which, he asserted, had been used towards him, and hastened to put himself at the head of the insurgents at Saragossa. The

Emperor regarded this conduct as perfidious, and ordered that, when the town was taken, Count Palafox should be treated, not as a prisoner of war, but as a state prisoner, and accordingly disarmed and sent to prison at Vincennes. Marshal Lannes, therefore, found himself under the necessity of sending an officer to arrest the governor and demand his sword. He entrusted the duty to D'Albuquerque, who found it all the more painful that he was not only a Spaniard, but a relation and old friend of Palafox's. I have never been able to divine the marshal's motive in selecting him for such a duty. D'Albuquerque, however, had to obey, and entered Saragossa more dead than alive. He presented himself to Palafox, who handed him his sword, saying, with a noble pride: 'If your ancestors, the famous D'Albuquerques, could return to life, there is not one of them who would not sooner be in the place of the prisoner who is surrendering this sword, covered with honour, than in that of the renegade who is receiving it on behalf of the enemies of his country.' Poor D'Albuquerque, terrified and almost fainting, had to lean against a piece of furniture to avoid falling. The scene was related to us by Captain Pasqual, who, having been ordered to take charge of Palafox after his arrest, was present at the interview. Count Palafox remained in France till 1814.

How strange are human affairs! Palafox, having been proclaimed governor of Saragossa when the insurrection broke out, has received both from fame and history the credit of the heroic defence. He really contributed little to it, for he fell ill early in the siege, and handed over the command to General Saint-Marc, a Belgian in the Spanish service, and it was he who sustained all our attacks with such remarkable courage and ability. But as he was a foreigner, Spanish pride assigned all the glory of the defence to Palafox, whose name will go down to posterity, while that of the brave and ardent General Saint-Marc is mentioned in no history, and remains forgotten.[1]

The garrison, 40,000 in number, were forwarded to France as prisoners of war, but two-thirds of them escaped and recommenced the slaughter of Frenchmen as members of guerilla bands. They had carried away the germs of typhus, and died later. The ruined streets of the city were a perfect charnel-house, and the contagion spread to the French troops who formed the new garrison.

[1] [Napier's estimate of Palafox is even lower.]

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

With the capture of Saragossa, Marshal Lannes' work was done, and he started to rejoin the Emperor at Paris and accompany him into Germany. We rode the distance from Aragon to Bidassoa. The celebrated guerilla Mina attacked our escort in the Pyrenees near Pampeluna, and a servant of the marshal's who acted as outrider was killed. At Saint-Jean de Luz the marshal found his carriage and offered places in it to Saint-Mars, Le Couteulx, and myself. I sold my horses, and De Viry took my servant back. One of the marshal's valets having vainly tried to act as outrider, and there being no postilions, we three offered to do three stages apiece. I admit that this riding post cost me a good deal hardly healed as I was of my two wounds, but I reckoned on my youth and my strong constitution. I began my duties on the darkest of nights and under a violent storm, and besides, as I was not preceded by a postilion as the outrider who carries despatches usually is, I got into bad places, and rode my horse into holes; the carriage was at my heels, I did not know the position of the post-houses, which are hard to find at night and in such weather. To finish my misfortunes, I had to wait for some time for the ferry-boat across the Adour at Peyrehorade. I took cold and was shivering, and in a good deal of pain from my wound when I took my place in the carriage. You may see from these details that an aide-de-camp's life is not all rosewater. We stayed forty-eight hours at Lectoure, where the marshal had a comfortable house in the buildings of the old bishop's palace. Then we continued our journey towards Paris. As the marshal travelled night and day and could not bear the smell of cooked food, we were obliged to fast pretty well for six stages, and then only to eat as we galloped. I was, therefore, much surprised when one evening the marshal begged me to stop at Pétignac or Le Roulet, and to announce that he would halt an hour for supper. I was especially surprised when I saw that the house to which I was directed was not an inn; but when the marshal's coming

was announced, the inhabitants displayed the most lively joy, laid the table, prepared a succulent repast, and flew out to meet the carriage. The marshal, with tears in his eyes, kissed them all round, including the smallest brats, and showed every sign of the warmest friendship towards the postmaster. After dinner he bade Saint-Mars take out of his pocket-book a superb gold watch and a chain of the same metal clasped with a big diamond, presented these to the postmaster and his wife, gave 300 or 400 francs to the maids, and departed after most tender embraces.

I supposed that this family were the marshal's relations, but when we were in the carriage he said to us, 'You are doubtless astonished at the interest I take in these good people, but the husband did me a great service, for he saved my life in Syria.' Then the marshal related to us how, when he was a general of division at Acre, he was leading an assault against the tower when he received a bullet through his neck, and fell senseless. His soldiers, deeming him dead, were retiring in disorder before thousands of Turks, who cut off the heads of such as they could catch and placed them on the points of the palisades. A brave captain appealed to the men to bring away the body of their general, carried him off, and, when exhausted, dragged him by one leg to the back of the trenches. The soil being sandy, the general's head received no injury, and his senses being restored by the shaking he was tended by Larrey, who quite brought him back to life. The captain having been severely wounded left the army with a small pension, and married a wife without much money. But the marshal became a second Providence for the family. He purchased for them a postmastership, some fields, some horses, and a house, and had the eldest son educated at his own expense until the others were old enough to leave their parents. So naturally these good people were as grateful to the marshal, as he to his rescuer. The ex-captain no doubt lost a good deal when Marshal Lannes died. He never saw him again after that day.

We continued our journey, with the cold always increasing, which made the way from Orleans to Paris wretched enough. I arrived on April 2, terribly tired and in much pain. The joy with which I met my mother again was mingled with bitter, for she had just heard that my brother had been taken prisoner by Spanish guerillas, and I was about to start on a new campaign.

The moment I got to Paris the marshal took me to the minister of war to find out what he had done for me. My commission as major lacked only the Emperor's signature,

but Napoleon, being much occupied with the movements of the Austrian army, did not ask the minister for the document, which was all ready, and made no promotion. An evil fate pursued me.

The capital was much excited. The English, seeing us occupied in Spain, thought that the moment had come to raise the whole North of Europe against Napoleon. The plan was premature, for the Emperor still could dispose of vast influence and a strong force in Germany. Prussia did not dare to stir; the Princes of the Germanic Confederation placed their armies at the service of Napoleon; even Russia sent a corps of 25,000 men. In spite of this, the Austrians in the pay of England had just declared war, and their armies were advancing on our ally, Bavaria. The Emperor was making ready to go to Germany, whither Lannes was to follow him. All the carriages had been reserved by the hundreds of generals and others, and I was in a difficulty, for both the Emperor and the marshal were to leave Paris on April 13, and I had orders to start a day before them. I had therefore to make up my mind to ride post once more. Luckily, a week's rest had reduced the irritation of the wound in my side. That in my forehead was healed over, and I was careful to wear a cocked hat instead of my heavy busby. My servant, Woirland, went with me, but being a very bad rider, he often fell off, only saying, as he got up again, 'How tough you are! Oh, yes; you are tough!'

In forty-eight hours I covered the hundred and twenty leagues between Paris and Strasburg, in spite of rain and snow. Woirland could do no more; we had to change our mode of travelling. Besides, I knew that in Germany nobody posted on horseback, and we were still only half-way to Augsburg, our rendezvous. At last I found a carriage, and reached Augsburg, where I joined my comrades. The Emperor, the marshal, and nearly all the troops were already in the field. I managed to buy a horse in the town. I exchanged my carriage for another, and we set off in the saddle. In the course of a few weeks we had sold our horses cheap, and spent a great deal of money—all to go and meet the bullets which were to take away many of our lives. You may call the feeling which urged us love of glory, or perhaps madness; it was an imperious master, and we marched without looking back.

We reached head-quarters on April 20, during the action at Abensberg. Marshal Lannes complimented us on our zeal, and sent us off at once into the thick of the fire to bear his orders. The Austrians, under the Archduke Charles,

withdrew behind the Danube at Landshut, beyond the Iser, as usual omitting to destroy the bridges. Napoleon attacked Landshut with the infantry. They crossed the bridge twice under a hail of bullets, but on reaching the other side were stopped by a huge gate, which the enemy's rear-guard was defending with a brisk fire from the walls of the town. Twice our columns were repulsed with loss, but the Emperor, who set very much by the capture of Landshut, that he might cross the Iser before the archduke could organise his resistance more thoroughly, ordered a third attack. The troops told off for this were getting ready to march when Napoleon, seeing his aide-de-camp, General Mouton, who was coming to report the result of a mission which he had given him that morning, said, 'You come just in time; put yourself at the head of that column, and carry the town of Landshut.' So perilous a task set him without notice would have astonished a man less brave than General Mouton. He was in no way perturbed by it. Dismounting and drawing his sword, he ordered the charge to be sounded. He was the first to dash over the bridge at the head of the grenadiers. Finding the gate of Landshut in his way, he had it broken down with hatchets, put all who resisted to the sword, took the town, and came calmly back to the Emperor with his report of the mission which he had undertaken in the morning. Strangely enough, during their conversation not a word was said about the capture of Landshut, and the Emperor never spoke of it to General Mouton; but after the campaign he sent him a remarkable picture by Hersant, in which the general is represented marching to the attack of the place at the head of his column. This keepsake from Napoleon was worth more than the highest eulogies.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Crossing the Iser, the French army marched on Eckmühl, where the bulk of the Austrian army was massed. The Emperor and Marshal Lannes passed the night at Landshut; a battle on the following day appeared imminent. The town and neighbourhood were full of troops. In every direction staff officers were carrying orders and returning. My comrades and I were fully occupied, and as we only had very second-rate horses, picked up anyhow, and they were pretty thoroughly tired, we foresaw that it would be difficult for us to perform our duties satisfactorily in the battle of the morrow.

When I came in about ten o'clock, on returning from an errand three or four leagues from Landshut, Marshal Lannes gave me an order to carry to General Gudin. His division being a long way off, I was to remain with him till the marshal arrived in the field. This was embarrassing, for the horse which I had been riding was knocked up, the marshal had not one to lend me, and there was no French cavalry at Landshut which might be required to supply me with one. I could not go to the Emperor's quarters to tell the marshal that I was practically horseless, yet without a good steed how was I to carry an order on which perhaps the safety of the army depended? I got out of the difficulty by what I admit was a wicked act, but perhaps excusable in the circumstances. You shall decide. I called my servant, Woirland, a practised 'snapper-up of unconsidered trifles,' who had served his apprenticeship in Humbert's Black Legion, and was never at a loss. I imparted my difficulty to him, and bade him procure me a horse at any price; I simply must have one. 'You shall have it,' said he, and leaving the town he made for the camp of the Wurtemberg cavalry. The men were all asleep, sentries and all; Woirland inspected the horses at his ease, saw one that he liked, unfastened it, and, at the risk of getting knocked on the head if anyone saw him, he brought it out of the camp, turned everything off its back, came back to the town, put my saddle on it, and informed me that it was all ready. Now the

horses of the Wurtemberg cavalry are marked on the near thigh with a pair of stag's horns, so I could easily recognise whence the new mount, which my Figaro had brought me, was procured. He did not deny it; the horse, to put it plainly, had been stolen. But see how a difficult situation stretches the conscience! To silence mine, I said to myself: 'If I do not take this animal, which belongs to the King of Wurtemberg, it is impossible for me to bear to General Gudin the orders which he has got to execute at daybreak. This may involve the loss of a battle, and cost the King of Wurtemberg his crown. Therefore, in making use of a horse from his army I am indirectly doing him a service. Besides, as the Emperor gave him a kingdom, he may very well lend the Emperor a horse, which I shall return when I have made use of it to their joint advantage.' Whether this reasoning would satisfy a casuist I know not, but matters were pressing; I leapt into the saddle and galloped off. Master Woirland knew his business, it was an excellent horse. The only thing which disturbed me was that the infernal pair of horns stamped on its thigh, showing whence it came, exposed me to the chance of having it claimed by some Wurtemberg officer. Finally, at daybreak, I reached General Gudin, just as his troops were marching. I went with him until the Emperor and Marshal Lannes overtook us with the main body. The battle was fought, victory was never for a moment in doubt. Marshal Davout distinguished himself, earning the title which was given him later on of Prince of Eckmühl.

My horse behaved splendidly, but his last day had come. In the hottest of the action, Marshal Lannes sent one of his least experienced aides-de-camp to General Saint-Sulpice with orders to charge with his cuirassiers a brigade of the enemy's cavalry. The aide-de-camp explained matters so badly that the general was going off in quite a different direction, and the marshal perceiving this told me to place myself at the head of the division, and to guide it towards the enemy by the high road which runs through the village of Eckmühl. While Lannes was explaining his wishes to me, studying a map which he, I, and General Cervoni were holding each by one side, a cannon-ball came across it, and threw General Cervoni stone dead against the marshal's shoulder. He was covered with the blood of his friend, who had come from Corsica only the day before on purpose to make this campaign. Deeply grieved as he was, he continued to give me his orders with perfect clearness, and I hastened to General Saint-Sulpice,

and rode beside him at the head of the cuirassiers towards Eckmühl.

The village was occupied by a regiment of Croats, who, instead of firing upon us out of the windows where they were out of reach of our sabres, bravely but stupidly left their excellent position, and came down into the street, intending to form close column, and stop our squadrons with their bayonets. The French cuirassiers gave them no time for this; they came up so quickly that the Croats, caught in disarray just as they were coming out of the houses, were driven in and sabred, and soon the street was piled with their bodies. They did not, however, yield without a valiant defence. One battalion especially made a vigorous resistance, and my horse having received in the scuffle the point of a bayonet in his heart went forward a few steps, and fell dead against a corner stone in such wise that one of my legs was caught under the poor animal's body, and my knee pressed against the stone, so that I was quite unable to move. Woe to the dismounted horseman in such cases! No one stops to pick him up, nor, indeed, could he if he would; so the first regiment of our cuirassiers, after cutting down all the Croats who did not lay down their arms promptly, continued the charge, and passed through the village followed by the whole division at a gallop.

Horses, unless very tired, seldom set their feet on the body of a man lying on the ground. Thus the whole division of cuirassiers passed over me without doing the slightest injury. Still, I could not free myself, and my situation became more unpleasant when I foresaw that our cuirassiers would be repulsed and driven back through the village by a very strong force of the enemy's cavalry, which I had seen before the charge on the further side of Eckmühl. I was afraid that the Austrian troopers would serve me out by way of revenging the Croats. During the moment of quiet which succeeded the uproar of the street fighting and the passage of cavalry, I perceived at no great distance two grenadiers of the enemy's who had laid aside their pieces, and were helping their wounded comrades to rise. I beckoned them to come to me and assist me in getting my leg free; whether from good nature or from fear that I might have them killed, although at that moment I had no Frenchmen at my orders, they obeyed. They knew that our cuirassiers were in front, and probably regarded themselves as prisoners; anyhow, these kind of soldiers do not reflect much. They came up, and I

admit that when I saw one of them pull from his pocket a knife to cut the leather of the stirrup which held my foot under the horse, I was afraid that the fancy might seize him of sticking it, as he might quite safely have done, into me. But he was honest, and with the help of his comrade succeeded in setting me on my feet. I made them take my saddle and bridle, and left Eckmühl to rejoin our infantry, which was still outside.

The two Croats followed me in the most docile manner, and it was lucky for them they did, for hardly were we out of the village when a fearful noise arose behind us. It was caused by the return of our squadrons, who, as I expected, were driven back by the enemy's superior force, and these in their turn were sabring all who lagged behind.

Our cuirassiers, furious at their repulse, tried as they galloped past me to run through the Croats who were carrying my saddle. The men had helped me; I objected, therefore, to their being killed, and ordered them by signs to lie down in a ditch, where the sabres could not reach them. I should have put myself there if I had not observed at the head of the Austrian force some Uhlans, who could easily have reached me with their lances. Luckily for us, help came to Saint-Sulpice's division before it had gone 300 or 400 paces, for, seeing it in retreat, the Emperor sent forward two divisions of cavalry, which were rapidly hastening to meet us. But short as was the distance which I had to traverse to escape the Austrian lances, it was a long way for a dismounted man. Two cuirassiers took me between them, and each giving me a hand carried me along so well that with the help of long strides, I could keep up for a couple of minutes with their galloping horses. This was all that mattered, the supports came up promptly, the enemy stayed their pursuit and were even driven back beyond Eckmühl, which our troops reoccupied. I was glad to be at the end of my more than double-quick march, for I was out of breath, and could not have kept it up. I had a good opportunity of observing how ill-suited for war are such big and heavy boots as our cuirassiers then wore. A young officer of the squadron which saved me had his horse killed, and two of his men stretched out their hands to help him to run as I had done, but, although he was tall and slight and far more active than I, his stiff and heavy foot-gear prevented him from moving his legs quickly enough to keep up with the horses. He was compelled to let go of the helping hands, and the next time we saw the ground which we had so rapidly crossed, we found the

lieutenant killed by the stroke of a lance. We could see that he had been trying to get rid of his large boots, one of which was pulled half off. My little hussar boots, being light and flexible, had been no hindrance to me.

Hoping to recover my saddle and bridle, I returned to the ditch, where I had made the two Croats hide, and found them quietly lying there. Several charges had taken place across their lair without their receiving the least scratch. I rewarded them, and marched them in front of me to the hillock, where the Emperor and Marshal Lannes were, knowing well that my chief would not wish to lose my services during the rest of the battle, and would make one of the regiments which were near him lend me a horse. He gave orders accordingly, but as at the moment there were none but cuirassiers in the neighbourhood, they brought me an immense heavy animal, quite unfit to carry an aide-de-camp rapidly from point to point. The marshal having remarked this, a colonel of Wurtemberg Light Horse, who happened to be behind the Emperor, eager to do a polite thing, bade his orderly dismount; and there I was again on an excellent horse, marked with the stag's horns. The colonel's kindness renewed in some measure my remorse for the crime I had committed in the morning, but I silenced it by repeating my somewhat Jesuitical arguments. The joke of the thing was that, as I was bearing an order to the reserve, I fell in with my servant, Woirland, who, coming up to give me some provisions out of his always well-filled saddle-bags, exclaimed, 'Why, that horse is the devil! He was grey this morning, and now he's black!'

The battle of Eckmühl began and lasted all day on broken ground, covered with small hills and copse-wood; but, as one advances towards the Danube, the country grows level and bare until one enters the immense plain which extends to Ratisbon. The Austrian cavalry is one of the best in Europe, but under the plea that they must reserve it to cover their retreat in the event of their being beaten, they employ it not at all, or very little, during the fight. This leads to their defeat, and compels a retreat which they might have avoided. Then, however, their cavalry does cover their retrograde movement admirably. This happened at Eckmühl,[1] for, as soon as the Archduke Charles saw that the battle was lost, and that his infantry, driven out of the hilly ground, were exposed to the French squadrons, while making it difficult to retreat on the plain, he caused

[1] [And at Königgrätz, in 1866.]

the whole of his cavalry to take the offensive. They came bravely forward to check us, while the Austrian infantry, artillery, and baggage were retiring upon Ratisbon. The Emperor, on his side, advanced our hussars and chasseurs, supported by the strong brigades of Saint-Sulpice and Nansouty, to whom the enemy opposed two brigades of the same arm. The light cavalry on both sides drew off promptly to the flank, to avoid being crushed by these formidable steel-clad masses, who advanced rapidly upon each other, met with a shock, penetrated each other, and became one immense mêlée. A faint twilight, and the beams of a rising moon, alone gave light for this terrible and majestic combat. The shouts of the fighters were drowned by the sound of repeated blows of heavy sabres upon thousands of helmets and cuirasses, from which the sparks flew in numbers. Austrians and French both wished to remain masters of the field. Courage, tenacity, and strength were well matched, but the defensive arms were unequal, for the Austrian cuirasses only covered them in front, and gave no protection to the back in a crowd. In this way, the French troopers, who, having double cuirasses and no fear of being wounded from behind, had only to think of thrusting, were able to give point at the enemy's backs, and slew a great many of them with small loss to themselves. This unequal fight lasted some minutes; finally the Austrians, with immense loss in killed and wounded, were compelled, for all their bravery, to abandon the ground. When they had wheeled about, they understood still better what a disadvantage it is not to have a cuirass behind as well as in front. The fight became a butchery, as our cuirassiers pursued the enemy, and for the space of half a league the ground was piled with killed and wounded cuirassiers. Few would have escaped, had not our men stayed to charge some battalions of Hungarian grenadiers, which they broke up and captured almost entirely. This fight settled a question which had been long debated, as to the necessity of double cuirasses, for the proportion of Austrians wounded and killed amounted respectively to eight and thirteen for one Frenchman.

After this terrible charge, the enemy, unable to resist any further, fled in the greatest disorder, briskly pursued along the road—fugitives pell-mell with victors. Marshal Lannes proposed to the Emperor that he should profit by the rout of the Austrians to destroy their army completely, hurling it back on the Danube, and entering Ratisbon with it. But the other marshals pointed out that we were still three leagues

from that place, that our infantry was weary, and that it would be dangerous to risk a night engagement against an enemy which had shown such obstinate courage. The Emperor therefore ordered the pursuit to cease, and the army bivouacked in the plain. The Austrians admitted a loss of 5,000 killed, and 15,000 prisoners, twelve colours, and sixteen guns ; of ours they only captured a few men, and killed 1,500. In such disorder did the enemy retreat that in the night one of their cavalry regiments was straying about our camp, unable to find any line of retreat open. Colonel Guéhéneuc, bearing an order, stumbled upon this force, and the commander, after having seized M. Guéhéneuc, said, 'You were my prisoner, now I am yours,' and we saw Guéhéneuc come up, much to the Emperor's amusement, and the Austrian regiment which had surrendered to him.

After such a success, captured horses were, as you may suppose, plentiful in the camp. I bought three capital animals for a few louis, and being thus completely mounted for the rest of the campaign I gave up the two screws which I had previously acquired, and returned to the Wurtembergers the horse which they had lent me.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

CHAPTER XL.

The archduke had made use of the darkness to reach Ratisbon, where the bridge enabled him to transport his baggage and the greater part of his army to the left bank of the Danube. Then we were able to perceive the extent of the Emperor's foresight in having at the outset of the campaign ordered Davout—coming up from Hamburg and Hanover, with a view of joining the Grand Army on the right bank of the Danube—to secure possession of Ratisbon and his bridge by leaving a regiment there. Davout had, accordingly, left the 65th of the line, commanded by a relative of his, Colonel Coutard, wishing to give him an opportunity of distinguishing himself. But Coutard could not hold the place, and, after some hours' fighting, surrendered it to the Austrians, who, but for the means of retreat afforded by the bridge, would have been compelled to lay down their arms. Colonel Coutard having stipulated for the return to France of himself and his officers alone, the Emperor decreed that in future the officers of a corps which had been compelled to capitulate should share the fate of their men, hoping thereby to encourage commanders to resist more stubbornly.

The Emperor could not, however, march on to Vienna until Ratisbon was retaken, otherwise, as soon as he had moved forward, the archduke would have crossed the Danube by the bridge, and, bringing his army back to the right bank, would have attacked us in rear. We had then, at all costs, to take possession of the place. Marshal Lannes was charged with this difficult duty. The enemy had 6,000 men in Ratisbon, whom they could reinforce to any extent by help of the bridge; many guns were in position on the ramparts, and the parapet was garnished with infantry. The fortifications of Ratisbon were old and bad, the ditches were dry and used as kitchen gardens. Still, although the means of defence were not such as could have resisted a regular siege, the town was in a position—especially as the garrison could communicate with an army of more than 80,000 men—to repel an assault. To get into the place it was necessary to descend a deep ditch with the help of

ladders, cross it under fire from the enemy, and scale the rampart, the angles of which were commanded by a flanking fire.

The Emperor, having dismounted, took up his position on a hillock a short cannon-shot from the town. Having noticed near the Straubing gate a house which had imprudently been built against the rampart, he sent forward some twelve-pounders and howitzers, and ordering them to concentrate their fire upon this house, so that its ruins, falling into the ditch, might partially fill it, and form at the foot of the wall an incline by which our troops might mount to the assault. While the artillery was executing this order, Lannes brought Morand's division close up to the promenade which goes round the town; and, in order to shelter his troops from the enemy's fire, up to the last moment he placed them in rear of a large stone storehouse, which appeared to have been placed there on purpose to aid our undertaking. Carts laden with ladders taken from the neighbouring villages were brought up to this point, where perfect protection was obtained against the Austrian projectiles. While waiting till everything was ready, Marshal Lannes had gone back to the Emperor to receive his final orders. As they were chatting, a bullet—fired, in all probability, from one of the long-range Tyrolese rifles—struck Napoleon on the right ankle. The pain was at first so sharp that the Emperor had to lean upon Lannes, but Dr. Larrey, who quickly arrived, declared that the wound was trifling. If it had been severe enough to require an operation, the event would certainly have been considered a great misfortune for France; yet it might perhaps have spared her many calamities. However, the report that the Emperor had been wounded spread through the army. Officers and men ran up from all sides; in a moment Napoleon was surrounded by thousands of men, in spite of the fire which the enemy's guns concentrated on the vast group. The Emperor, wishing to withdraw his troops from this useless danger, and to calm the anxiety of the more distant corps, who were getting unsteady in their desire to come and see what was the matter, mounted his horse the instant his wound was dressed, and rode down the front of the whole line, amid loud cheers.

It was at this extempore review held in presence of the enemy that Napoleon first granted gratuities to private soldiers, appointing them knights of the Empire and members, at the same time, of the Legion of Honour. The regimental commanders recommended, but the Emperor also allowed soldiers who thought they had claims to come and represent them before him; then he decided upon them by himself. Now

it befell that an old grenadier who had made the campaigns of Italy and Egypt, not hearing his name called, came up, and, in a calm tone of voice, asked for the Cross. 'But,' said Napoleon, 'what have you done to deserve it?' 'It was I, sir, who, in the desert of Joppa, when it was so terribly hot, gave you a water-melon.' 'I thank you for it again; but the gift of the fruit is hardly worth the Cross of the Legion of Honour.' Then the grenadier, who up till then had been as cool as ice, working himself up into a frenzy, shouted, with the utmost volubility, 'Well, and don't you reckon seven wounds received at the bridge of Arcola, at Lodi and Castiglione, at the Pyramids, at Acre, Austerlitz, Friedland; eleven campaigns in Italy, Egypt, Austria, Prussia, Poland ——' but the Emperor cut him short, laughing, and mimicking his excited manner, cried: 'There, there—how you work yourself up when you come to the essential point! That is where you ought to have begun; it is worth much more than your melon. I make you a knight of the Empire, with a pension of 1,200 francs. Does that satisfy you?' 'But, your Majesty, I prefer the Cross.' 'You have both one and the other, since I make you knight.' 'Well, I would rather have the Cross.' The worthy grenadier could not be moved from that point, and it took all manner of trouble to make him understand that the title of knight of the Empire carried with it the Legion of Honour. He was not appeased on this point until the Emperor had fastened the decoration on his breast, and he seemed to think a great deal more of this than of his annuity of 1,200 francs. It was by familiarities of this kind that the Emperor made the soldiers adore him, but it was a means that was only available to a commander whom frequent victories had made illustrious; any other general would have injured his reputation by it.

As soon as Lannes gave notice that all was ready for the assault, we returned towards Ratisbon, the Emperor meanwhile going back to his hillock to witness the operations. The various army corps round him awaited events in silence. Our artillery had completely destroyed the house by the rampart, and its fragments falling into the ditch had made a slope practicable enough, but not reaching higher than to ten or twelve feet from the top of the wall; to reach this therefore, ladders had to be placed on the rubbish no less than to descend into the ditch. On reaching the building, behind which Morand's division were taking shelter from the fire, Lannes called for fifty volunteers to go forward and plant

the ladders. Many more than that number came forward, and the number had to be reduced. The brave fellows, led by picked officers, set out with admirable spirit; but they were hardly clear of the building when they met the hail of bullets, and were nearly all laid low. A few only continued to descend into the ditch, where the guns soon disabled them, and the remains of this first column fell back, streaming with blood, to the place where the division was sheltered. Nevertheless, at the call of Lannes and Morand, fifty more volunteers appeared, and, seizing the ladders, made for the ditch. No sooner, however, did they show themselves than a still hotter fire nearly annihilated them. Cooled by these two repulses, the troops made no response to the marshal's third call for volunteers. If he had ordered one or more companies to march, they would, no doubt, have obeyed; but he knew well what a difference there is in point of effect between obedience on the soldiers' part and *dash;* and for the present danger volunteers were much better than troops obeying orders. Vainly, however, did the marshal renew his appeal to the bravest of a brave division; vainly did he call upon them to observe that the eyes of the Emperor and all the Grand Army were on them. A gloomy silence was the only reply, the men being convinced that to pass beyond the walls of the building into the enemy's fire was certain death. At length Lannes, exclaiming, 'Well, I will let you see that I was a grenadier before I was a marshal, and still am one,' seized a ladder, lifted it, and would have carried it towards the breach. His aides-de-camp tried to stop him; he resisted, and got angry with us. I ventured to say, '*Monsieur le Maréchal*, you would not wish us to be disgraced, and that we should be if you were to receive the slightest wound in carrying that ladder to the ramparts as long as one of your aides-de-camp was left alive.' Then, in spite of his efforts, I dragged the end of the ladder from him, and put it on my shoulder, while De Viry took the other end, and our comrades by pairs took up other ladders.

At the sight of a marshal disputing with his aides-de-camp for the lead of the assault, a shout of enthusiasm went up from the whole division. Officers and soldiers wished to lead the column, and in their eagerness for this honour they pushed my comrades and me about, trying to get hold of the ladders. If, however, we had given them up, we should seem to have been playing a comedy to stimulate the troops. The wine had been drawn, and we had to drink it, bitter as

it might be. Understanding this, the marshal let us have our way, though fully expecting to see the greater part of his staff exterminated as they marched at the head of this perilous attack.

I have said already that my comrades, although as brave as possible, lacked experience, and more especially what is called military tact. I made, therefore, no demur about taking the command of the little column. The matter was important enough to warrant it, and no one contested my right. Behind the building I organised the detachment which was to follow us. The destruction of the two former columns I ascribed to the imprudence with which their leaders had massed together the soldiers composing them. This arrangement was unsuitable in two ways. First, it gave the enemy the advantage of firing upon a mass instead of upon isolated men, and secondly, our grenadiers, who were laden with ladders, having formed a single group and getting in each other's way, had not been able to move fast enough to get quickly clear of the Austrian fire. I settled, therefore, that De Viry and I, carrying the first ladder, should start off at a run; that the second ladder should follow at twenty paces distant, and the rest in due course; that when we reached the promenade the ladders should be placed five feet apart to avoid confusion; that when we descended into the ditch we should leave every second ladder against the wall towards the promenade so that the troops might follow without delay; that the others should be lifted and carried quickly to the breach, where we should place them only a foot apart, both on account of the want of space and in order that we might reach the top of the rampart close together and push back the besieged when they tried to throw us down. This plan having been expounded and comprehended, the marshal, who approved it, cried, 'Off with you, my boys, and Ratisbon is taken.' At the word, De Viry and I darted out, crossed the promenade at a run, and, lowering our ladder, descended into the ditch. Our comrades followed with fifty grenadiers In vain did the cannon thunder, the musketry rattle, grape-shot and bullets strike trees and walls. It is very difficult to take aim at isolated individuals moving very fast and twenty paces apart, and we got into the ditch without one man of our little column being wounded. The ladders already indicated were lifted, we carried them to the top of the rubbish from the ruined house, and placing them against the parapet, we ran up them to the rampart. I was first up one of the first ladders, Labédoyère, who was climbing the one beside

me, feeling that the lower end of it was not very steadily placed on the rubbish, asked me to give him my hand to steady him, and so we both reached the top of the rampart in full view of the Emperor and the whole army, who saluted us with a mighty cheer. It was one of the finest days of my life. De Viry and D'Albuquerque joined us in a moment with the other aides-de-camp and fifty grenadiers, and by this time a regiment of Morand's division was coming towards the ditch at the double.

The chances of war are often strange. The two first detachments had been annihilated before reaching the foot of the breach, and yet the third suffered no loss whatever. Only my friend De Viry had a button of his pelisse carried away by a bullet; yet if the enemy on the parapet had had the presence of mind to charge with the bayonet on Labédoyère and me, it is probable that we should have been overwhelmed by their number, and either killed or hurled back into the ditch. But Austrians lose their heads very quickly; the boldness and rapidity of our attack astonished them to such a point that when they saw us swarming over the breach they first slackened their fire and soon ceased firing altogether. Not only did none of their companies march against us, but all went off in the opposite direction to the point which we had just carried.

As I said, the attack took place close to the Straubing gate. Marshal Lannes had ordered me to get it opened or break it down, so that he could enter the town with Morand's division. Accordingly, as soon as I saw my fifty grenadiers on the ramparts, and the head of the supporting regiment already arrived in the ditch, where their passage was secured by a further supply of ladders, I went down into the town without further delay, every moment being precious. We marched steadily towards the Straubing gate, only a hundred paces from the breach, and great was my surprise to find an Austrian battalion massed under the immense archway, all the men facing towards the gate, so as to be ready to defend it if the French broke it in. The major in command, thinking only of the duty which was entrusted to him, and taking no heed of the noise which he heard on the ramparts close by, was so confident that the French attack would fail that he had not even placed a sentry outside the archway to let him know what was going on, so he was thunderstruck at seeing us come up in his rear.

He had taken up his position behind his men, so that

having faced about on seeing us approach, he found himself fronting the little French column, the strength of which he was quite unable to judge, for I had formed it in two squads, which rested on the sides of the arch and closed it completely. At their major's cry of surprise, the battalion all faced round, and the rear sections, which had become the front, presented their muskets at us. Our grenadiers also raised theirs, and as only one pace separated the two parties, you may imagine what a horrible massacre would have resulted if a shot had been fired. The situation was very dangerous for both sides, but their greater number gave the Austrians an immense advantage, for if we had opened fire muzzle to muzzle, our little column would have been destroyed, as well as the enemy's company which was in front of our muskets. But the rest of the battalion would have been cleared. It was lucky that our adversaries could not tell the weakness of our force, and I hastened to tell the major that as the town had been taken by assault and occupied by our troops, nothing remained for him but to lay down his arms under pain of being put to the sword.

The assured tone in which I spoke intimidated the officer; all the more so that he could hear the tumult produced by the successive arrival of our soldiers who had followed us over the breach, and hastened to form in front of the archway. He harangued his battalion, and, after having explained the situation to them, ordered them to lay down their arms. The companies who were close to our muzzles obeyed, but those who were at the other end of the archway, close to the gate and sheltered from our shot, fell to shouting, refused to surrender, and pushed forward the mass of the battalion till we were nearly upset. The officers, however, succeeded in quieting them, and everything seemed in a fair way to be settled, when the impetuous Labédoyère, impatient at the delay, lost his temper, and was on the point of ruining the whole thing; for, seizing the Austrian major by the throat, he was just about to run him through if the rest had not turned his sword aside. The other side then resumed their arms, and a bloody battle was about to take place, when the gate began to resound on the outside under the powerful blows which the axes of the pioneers of Morand's division, led by Marshal Lannes in person, were delivering upon it. Then the enemy, understanding that they would be between two fires, surrendered, and we made them march disarmed from under the archway towards the town. The

gate thus cleared, we opened it to the marshal, whose troops rushed into the place like a torrent.

After complimenting us, the marshal gave the order to march towards the bridge, in order to cut off such of the enemy's regiments as were in Ratisbon, and prevent the archduke from sending reinforcements. Hardly, however, had we entered the main street when we were threatened by a new danger. Our shells had set several houses on fire, and the fire was on the point of reaching some thirty wagons, which the enemy had abandoned after taking out the horses. If these had caught fire, the passage of our troops would certainly have been hindered, but we hoped to avoid the obstacle by slipping along close to the walls. Suddenly, however, the Austrian major whom I had presented to the marshal cried out in a tone of most profound despair, 'Conquerors and conquered, we are all lost; those wagons are full of powder!' We all turned pale, including the marshal, but, quickly recovering his calm in presence of imminent death, he made the French column take open order, and pile their muskets against the houses, and ordered the soldiers to push the wagons along from hand to hand until they were under the arch and out of the town. He himself set the example, and generals, officers and men all went to work. The Austrian prisoners worked with the French, for it was a question of life and death with them also. Many pieces of burning wood were already falling on the wagons, and if one of them had taken fire, we should have all been blown up, and the town entirely destroyed. But they worked with such energy that in a few minutes all the powder-wagons were pushed outside the town, whence the prisoners were made to draw them to our main park of artillery.

The tumbrils being safely out of the way, and the danger over, the marshal, with the infantry brigade, advanced to the centre of the town. Having reached this point, and wishing to make the quarters which he had already captured secure against any renewed attack, he followed the Spanish practice, and occupied all the windows in the principal streets. After this prudent arrangement, the marshal ordered that the column should continue its route towards the bridge, and ordered me to march at the head and guide it. I obeyed, though it seemed a difficult task, for I had never been in Ratisbon before, and, naturally, did not know the streets.

As the town belonged to our ally, the King of Bavaria, it might have been expected that the inhabitants would be sufficiently devoted to our cause to point out the way to the

bridge; but they were too frightened to come out, and we did not see one. All the doors and windows were shut and we were in too great a hurry to drive them in, for at every cross-road appeared groups of Austrians who retreated firing. The only retreat open to the enemy was across the bridge, and I thought that I might get there by following them, but there was so little concerted action among the Austrians that most of the squads of sharpshooters who were posted in front of us took flight at our approach in different directions. As I was thus lost in the labyrinth of unknown streets, with no idea of the direction that the column should take, suddenly a door opened, and a young woman, pale and with wild eyes, came flying towards us, crying, 'I am French, save me!' It was a Parisian milliner in business at Ratisbon, who fearing that, as a Frenchwoman, she might be ill-treated by the Austrians, had, as soon as she heard the sound of French voices, came to throw herself headlong into the arms of her compatriots. At sight of her a bright idea flashed into my mind. 'Do you know where the bridge is?' said I. 'Certainly.' 'Show us the way, then.' 'Great Heavens! In the middle of this shooting? I am frightened to death already, and was going to ask you to let me have some soldiers to defend my house. I am going back this moment.' 'Very sorry, but you will show us the bridge before you go back. Two men take the lady's arms, and march her along at the head of the column.' This was done in spite of the tears and cries of our fair compatriot. At every turning I asked her which direction we must take. The nearer we got to the Danube, the more skirmishers we met; the bullets whistled round the frightened milliner's ears, but, not being familiar with the sound, she was much less alarmed at the faint whistle than at the reports of the muskets. But suddenly one of the grenadiers who was supporting her got a bullet through his arm; the blood spurted on to her, her knees gave way, and we had to carry her. What had befallen her neighbour made me more cautious for her, so I put her in rear of the first section, so as to be in some measure sheltered from bullets by the men. At last we reached a little square facing the bridge. The enemy, who held the further end of it, as well as the suburb on the right bank named Stadt-am-Hof, no sooner caught sight of the column than they opened artillery fire. I thought it was useless to expose the lady from Paris any longer, and let her go free. But as the poor woman, who was more dead than alive, knew not where to take shelter, I advised her to enter a little chapel of Our Lady at the further end of

the square. She agreed, the grenadiers lifted her over the little grating which closed the entry, and she hastened to get out of reach of shot, crouching down behind the statue of the Virgin, where, I can assure you, she made herself pretty small.

On hearing that we had reached the bank of the river, the marshal came to the head of the column and recognised for himself the impossibility of crossing the bridge, the suburb on the left bank being on fire. While the assault was taking place, six Austrian battalions, posted on the ramparts at some distance from the point of attack, had remained tranquilly looking out to see if anyone was coming from the country. They were roused from their stolid inaction by the sound of firing in the direction of the bridge. Hastening thither, they found their retreat cut off both by us and by the burning suburb, and had to surrender.

The same day the Emperor entered Ratisbon, and ordered the troops who had not fought to assist the inhabitants in getting the fire under; still a great many houses were burnt. After having visited and rewarded the wounded, the glorious remains of the two first columns who had failed in their attempt, Napoleon wished also to see the third column, which had carried Ratisbon under his eyes. He testified his satisfaction, and decorated several. On the marshal reminding him of my old and new claims to the rank of major, Napoleon replied, 'You may consider the thing done.' Then turning to Berthier, 'Make me sign his commission the first time you bring up any papers.' I could only congratulate myself, I could not reasonably expect the Emperor to suspend his important work that I might have my commission a few days earlier. Indeed, I was almost beside myself at the marks of satisfaction which the Emperor and the marshal had shown towards me, and at the praises which my comrades and I received on all hands.

As you may suppose, before leaving the neighbourhood of the bridge, I had the Paris lady fetched from the chapel and taken to her house by an officer. The marshal, seeing the soldiers helping her to recross the grating, asked me how she got there. I told him the story, which he passed on to the Emperor, who laughed a good deal, and said that he should like to see the lady.

Among the many spectators of our attack—which, as I have said, was delivered in full view of the Grand Army—were Marshal Masséna and his staff. One of them, M. Pelet,[1] now

[1] [General Pelet, to whom we owe several works on Napoleon's campaigns, was appointed Director-General of Military Stores in 1830, and lived till 1858. The passage quoted is 'Mémoires sur la Guerre de 1809,' vol. ii. pp. 107, 8.]

Director-General of Military Stores, has written in his excellent work on the campaign of 1809: 'Marshal Lannes seized a ladder, and was starting to fix it himself; his aides-de-camp struggled to stop him. At the sight of this generous contest, the mass of our soldiers fell on the ladders, caught them up, and crossed the intervening span, preceded by the aides-de-camp. In the twinkling of an eye the ladders were fixed, the ditch crossed. On the top the first seen to appear, holding each other's hand, were Labédoyère and Marbot; the grenadiers followed.' This account of an eye-witness is quite correct; he rightly gives equal credit to my comrade and myself. But the biographer of poor Labédoyère [1] has not been so fair. After copying General Pelet's account, he has though fit to suppress my name and give Labédoyère the sole credit of having been the leader of the assault at Ratisbon. However, I saw no occasion to put him right; and, after all, General Pelet's work establishes the fact, to which 150,000 men could testify.

Ratisbon was taken April 23. The Emperor passed the next two days in the town, ordering all repairs to be done at his cost. As Napoleon, accompanied by Lannes, was going about the streets, I saw the milliner whom I had compelled to act as our guide to the bridge, and pointed her out to the marshal. He showed her to the Emperor, who spoke to her, with many jocose compliments on her courage; and subsequently sent her a handsome ring in memory of the assault. The crowd of soldiers and civilians who were about the Emperor, having made inquiries about the action of this little scene, the facts were somewhat distorted. The lady was represented as a heroine, who of her own accord had faced death to ensure the safety of her compatriots. In this form the tale was told, not only in the army, but throughout Germany. Even General Pelet was misled by the popular report. If the Parisian lady was for a time under fire from the enemy, love of glory had very little to do with it.

During our short stay at Ratisbon, the marshal appointed on his staff Lieutenant De la Bourdonnaye, an intelligent and brave young officer, who had been recommended to him by his father-in-law, M. De Guéhéneuc. La Bourdonnaye was distressed at missing the assault, but he had plenty

[1] [I cannot verify this reference, but the biographer of Labédoyère, in the Supplement (1841) to the 'Biographie Universelle,' certainly does not mention Marbot. It must, however, be remembered that Labédoyère was afterwards a more conspicuous personage.]

more opportunities of showing his courage. A comical adventure befell him in this connection. The dandies in the army had taken to trousers of inordinate width, which looked very well on horseback, but were a great hindrance to walking. During the action at Wels, La Bourdonnaye had been ordered by the marshal to dismount, and run across the bridge with an order for the troops. His spurs caught in his trousers, he fell, and we thought he was killed. But he picked himself up nimbly, and as he started off again, he heard the marshal call out, 'Is it not absurd to go to fight with six yards of cloth about your legs?' La Bourdonnaye, wishing, in his first battle under Lannes' eyes, to show his zeal, drew his sword, hacked and tore his trousers off at mid-thigh, and being thus released, set off running bare-kneed. Although we were under fire, the marshal and the staff laughed at the new-fashioned costume till they cried; and when La Bourdonnaye came back, he was complimented on his ready ingenuity.

Leaving a strong garrison in Ratisbon, the Emperor marched on Vienna by the right bank of the Danube, while the enemy followed the left bank in the same direction. I need not relate all the engagements which we had with Austrian forces trying to bar our road. I will only mention that Masséna, whose division had hitherto been held by circumstances aloof from all the fighting, was imprudent enough on May 3 to attack the bridge of Ebersberg over the Traun, which was defended by 40,000 men with a fortress in their rear. The attack was utterly useless, since before it began Lannes' division had crossed the Traun five leagues higher up, and was marching to take the Austrians in rear. They would certainly have retired at our approach without Masséna's losing a single man. His attack, made in order to pass a river already passed, succeeded, but with a loss of more than 1,000 killed and 2,000 wounded. The Emperor blamed[1] this waste of human life, and, doubtless to give Masséna a lesson, he sent from Wels a brigade of light cavalry under the command of General Durosnel, who descended the left bank of the Traun, and reached Ebersberg without firing a shot, at the same time as Masséna's troops entered after considerable loss. Napoleon went from Wels to Ebersberg by the right bank, which showed that the road was perfectly clear. On

[1] [General Pelet says that, if Napoleon did blame Masséna, he never heard of it.]

reaching the field of battle, he was deeply grieved at the sight of so many men uselessly killed, and would see no one for the whole evening. If any other than Masséna had ventured without orders to deliver an attack so imprudently, he would probably have been sent to the rear, but Masséna was the spoilt child of victory, and the Emperor limited himself to some severe remarks. The army was less indulgent, and criticised Masséna's conduct loudly. In excuse he said that as the Austrians who were defending the place under General Hiller had the bridge across the Danube at Mauthhausen, there was reason to fear that if they were not promptly attacked without awaiting the returning force from Wels, General Hiller might cross the Danube and join the archduke on the other side. But this would have involved no inconvenience for us: it would have been to our advantage, for we should have found the right bank of the river entirely undefended. Furthermore, the object that Masséna had in view was not attained, for General Hiller actually did cross the Danube at Stein, and made all haste to reach Vienna.

After crossing the Traun, burning the bridge at Mauthhausen, and passing the Enns, the army advanced to Mölk, without knowing what had become of General Hiller. Some spies assured us that the archduke had crossed the Danube and joined him, and that we should on the morrow meet the whole Austrian army, strongly posted in front of Saint-Pölten. In that case, we must make ready to fight a great battle; but if it were otherwise, we had to march quickly on Vienna in order to get there before the enemy could reach it by the other bank. For want of positive information the Emperor was very undecided. The question to be solved was, Had General Hiller crossed the Danube, or was he still in front of us, masked by a swarm of light cavalry, which, always flying, never let us get near enough to take a prisoner from whom one might get some enlightenment?

CHAPTER XLI.

Still knowing nothing for certain, we reached, on May 7, the pretty little town of Mölk, standing on the bank of the Danube, and overhung by an immense rock, on the summit of which rises a Benedictine convent, said to be the finest and richest in Christendom. From the rooms of the monastery, a wide view is obtained over both banks of the Danube. There the Emperor and many marshals, including Lannes, took up their quarters, while our staff lodged with the parish priest. Much rain had fallen during the week, and it had not ceased for twenty-four hours, and still was falling, so that the Danube and its tributaries were over their banks. That night, as my comrades and I, delighted at being sheltered from the bad weather, were having a merry supper with the parson, a jolly fellow, who gave us an excellent meal, the aide-de-camp on duty with the marshal came to tell me that I was wanted, and must go up to the convent that moment. I was so comfortable where I was that I found it annoying to have to leave a good supper and good quarters to go and get wet again, but I had to obey.

All the passages and lower rooms of the monastery were full of soldiers, forgetting the fatigues of the previous days in the monks' good wine. On reaching the dwelling-rooms, I saw that I had been sent for about some serious matter, for generals, chamberlains, orderly officers, said to me repeatedly, 'The Emperor has sent for you.' Some added, 'It is probably to give you your commission as major.' This I did not believe, for I did not think I was yet of sufficient importance to the sovereign for him to send for me at such an hour to give me my commission with his own hands. I was shown into a vast and handsome gallery, with a balcony looking over the Danube; there I found the Emperor at dinner with several marshals and the abbot of the convent, who has the title of bishop. On seeing me, the Emperor left the table, and went towards the balcony, followed by Lannes. I heard him say in a low tone, 'The execution of this plan is

almost impossible; it would be sending a brave officer for no purpose to almost certain death.' 'He will go, sir,' replied the marshal; 'I am certain he will go, at any rate we can but propose it to him.' Then, taking me by the hand, the marshal opened the window of the balcony over the Danube. The river at this moment, trebled in volume by the strong flood, was nearly a league wide; it was lashed by a fierce wind, and we could hear the waves roaring. It was pitch-dark, and the rain fell in torrents, but we could see on the other side a long line of bivouac fires. Napoleon, Marshal Lannes, and I, being alone on the balcony, the marshal said, 'On the other side of the river, you see an Austrian camp. Now, the Emperor is keenly desirous to know whether General Hiller's corps is there, or still on this bank. In order to make sure, he wants a stout-hearted man, bold enough to cross the Danube, and bring away some soldier of the enemy's, and I have assured him that you will go.' Then Napoleon said to me, 'Take notice that I am not giving you an order; I am only expressing a wish. I am aware that the enterprise is as dangerous as it can be, and you can decline it without any fear of displeasing me. Go, and think it over for a few moments in the next room; come back and tell us frankly your decision.'

I admit that when I heard Marshal Lannes' proposal I had broken out all over in a cold sweat; but at the same moment, a feeling, which I cannot define, but in which a love of glory and of my country was mingled, perhaps, with a noble pride, raised my ardour to the highest point, and I said to myself, 'The Emperor has here an army of 150,000 devoted warriors, besides 25,000 men of his guard, all selected from the bravest. He is surrounded with aides-de-camp and orderly officers, and yet when an expedition is on foot, requiring intelligence no less than boldness, it is I whom the Emperor and Marshal Lannes choose.' 'I will go, sir!' I cried without hesitation. 'I will go; and if I perish, I leave my mother to your Majesty's care.' The Emperor pulled my ear to mark his satisfaction; the marshal shook my hand, exclaiming, 'I was quite right to tell your Majesty that he would go. There's what you may call a brave soldier.'

My expedition being thus decided on, I had to think about the means of executing it. The Emperor called General Bertrand, his aide-de-camp, General Dorsenne, of the guard, and the commandant of the imperial head-quarters, and ordered them to put at my disposal whatever I might require. At my request an infantry picket went into the town to find the burgo-

master, the syndic of the boatmen, and five of his best hands. A corporal and five grenadiers of the old guard who could all speak German, and had still to earn their decorations, were also summoned, and voluntarily agreed to go with me. The Emperor had them brought in first, and promised that on their return they should receive the Cross at once. The brave men replied by a 'Vive l'Empereur!' and went to get ready. As for the five boatmen, on its being explained to them through the interpreter that they had to take a boat across the Danube, they fell on their knees and began to weep. The syndic declared that they might just as well be shot at once, as sent to certain death. The expedition was absolutely impossible, not only from the strength of the current, but because the tributaries had brought into the Danube a great quantity of fir trees recently cut down in the mountains, which could not be avoided in the dark, and would certainly come against the boat and sink it. Besides, how could one land on the opposite bank among willows which would scuttle the boat, and with a flood of unknown extent? The syndic concluded, then, that the operation was physically impossible. In vain did the Emperor tempt them with an offer of 6,000 francs per man; even this could not persuade them, though, as they said, they were poor boatmen with families, and this sum would be a fortune to them. But, as I have already said, some lives must be sacrificed to save those of the greater number, and the knowledge of this makes commanders sometimes pitiless. The Emperor was inflexible, and the grenadiers received orders to take the poor men, whether they would or not, and we went down to the town.

The corporal who had been assigned to me was an intelligent man. Taking him for my interpreter, I charged him as we went along to tell the syndic of the boatmen that as he had got to come along with us, he had better in his own interest show us his best boat, and point out everything that we should require for her fitting. The poor man obeyed; so we got an excellent vessel, and we took all that we wanted from the others. We had two anchors, but as I did not think we should be able to make use of them, I had sewn to the end of each cable a piece of canvas with a large stone wrapped in it. I had seen in the south of France the fishermen use an apparatus of this kind to hold their boats by throwing the cord over the willows at the water's edge. I put on a cap, the grenadiers took their forage caps, we had provisions, ropes,

axes, saws, a ladder,—everything, in short, which I could think of to take.

Our preparations ended, I was going to give the signal to start, when the five boatmen implored me with tears to let the soldiers escort them to their houses, to take, perhaps, the last farewell of their wives and children; but, fearing that a tender scene of this kind would further reduce their small stock of courage, I refused. Then the syndic said, 'Well, as we have only a short time to live, allow us five minutes to commend our souls to God, and do you do the same, for you also are going to your death.' They all fell on their knees, the grenadiers and I following their example, which seemed to please the worthy people much. When their prayer was over, I gave each man a glass of the monks' excellent wine, and we pushed out into the stream.

I had bidden the grenadiers follow in silence all the orders of the syndic who was steering; the current was too strong for us to cross over straight from Mölk: we went up, therefore, along the bank under sail for more than a league, and although the wind and the waves made the boat jump, this part was accomplished without accident. But when the time came to take to our oars and row out from the land, the mast, on being lowered, fell over to one side, and the sail, dragging in the water, offered a strong resistance to the current and nearly capsized us. The master ordered the ropes to be cut and the masts to be sent overboard: but the boatmen, losing their heads, began to pray without stirring. Then the corporal, drawing his sword, said, 'You can pray and work too; obey at once, or I will kill you.' Compelled to choose between possible and certain death, the poor fellows took up their hatchets, and with the help of the grenadiers, the mast was promptly cut away and sent floating. It was high time, for hardly were we free from this dangerous burden when we felt a fearful shock. A pine-stem borne down by the stream had struck the boat. We all shuddered, but luckily the planks were not driven in this time. Would the boat, however, resist more shocks of this kind? We could not see the stems, and only knew that they were near by the heavier tumble of the waves. Several touched us, but no serious accident resulted. Meantime the current bore us along, and as our oars could make very little way against it to give us the necessary slant, I feared for a moment that it would sweep us below the enemy's camp, and that my expedition would fail. By dint of hard rowing,

however, we had got three-quarters of the way over, when I saw an immense black mass looming over the water. Then a sharp scratching was heard, branches caught us in the face, and the boat stopped. To our questions the owner replied that we were on an island covered with willows and poplars, of which the flood had nearly reached the top. We had to grope about with our hatchets to clear a passage through the branches, and when we had succeeded in passing the obstacle, we found the stream much less furious than in the middle of the river, and finally reached the left bank in front of the Austrian camp. This shore was bordered with very thick trees, which, overhanging the bank like a dome, made the approach difficult no doubt, but at the same time concealed our boat from the camp. The whole shore was lighted up by the bivouac fires, while we remained in the shadow thrown by the branches of the willows. I let the boat float downwards, looking for a suitable landing-place. Presently I perceived that a sloping path had been made down the bank by the enemy to allow the men and horses to get to the water. The corporal adroitly threw into the willows one of the stones that I had made ready, the cord caught in a tree, and the boat brought up against the land a foot or two from the slope. It must have been just about midnight. The Austrians, having the swollen Danube between them and the French, felt themselves so secure that except the sentry the whole camp was asleep.

It is usual in war for the guns and the sentinels always to face towards the enemy, however far off he may be. A battery placed in advance of the camp was therefore turned towards the river, and sentries were walking on the top of the bank. The trees prevented them from seeing the extreme edge, while from the boat I could see through the branches a great part of the bivouac. So far my mission had been more successful than I had ventured to hope, but in order to make the success complete I had to bring away a prisoner, and to execute such an operation fifty paces away from several thousand enemies, whom a single cry would rouse, seemed very difficult. Still, I had to do something. I made the five sailors lie down at the bottom of the boat under guard of two grenadiers, another grenadier I posted at the bow of the boat, which was close to the bank, and myself disembarked, sword in hand, followed by the corporal and two grenadiers. The boat was a few feet from dry land; we had to walk in the water, but at last we were on the slope. We went up, and I was making ready to rush on the nearest sentry, disarm him, gag him, and

drag him off to the boat, when the ring of metal and the sound of singing in a low voice fell on my ears. A man, carrying a great tin pail, was coming to draw water, humming a song as he went; we quickly went down again to the river to hide under the branches, and as the Austrian stooped to fill his pail my grenadiers seized him by the throat, put a handkerchief full of wet sand over his mouth, and placing their sword-points against his body threatened him with death if he resisted or uttered a sound. Utterly bewildered, the man obeyed, and let us take him to the boat; we hoisted him into the hands of the grenadiers posted there, who made him lie down beside the sailors. While this Austrian was lying captured, I saw by his clothes that he was not strictly speaking a soldier, but an officer's servant. I should have preferred to catch a combatant, who could have given me more precise information; but I was going to content myself with this capture for want of a better, when I saw at the top of the slope two soldiers carrying a cauldron between them, on a pole. They were only a few paces off. It was impossible for us to re-embark without being seen. I therefore signed to my grenadiers to hide themselves again, and as soon as the two Austrians stooped to fill their vessel powerful arms seized them from behind, and plunged their heads under water. We had to stupefy them a little, since they had their swords, and I feared that they might resist. Then they were picked up in turn, their mouths covered with a handkerchief full of sand, and sword-points against their breasts constrained them to follow us. They were shipped as the servant had been, and my men and I got on board again.

So far all had gone well. I made the sailors get up and take their oars, and ordered the corporal to cast loose the rope which held us to the bank. It was, however, so wet, and the knot had been drawn so tight by the force of the stream, that it was impossible to unfasten. We had to saw the rope, which took us some minutes. Meanwhile, the rope, shaking with our efforts, imparted its movement to the branches of the willow round which it was wrapped, and the rustling became loud enough to attract the notice of the sentry. He drew near, unable to see the boat, but perceiving that the agitation of the branches increased, he called out, 'Who goes there?' No answer. Further challenge from the sentry. We held our tongues, and worked away. I was in deadly fear; after facing so many dangers, it would have been too cruel if we were wrecked in sight of port. At last, the rope was cut and the boat pushed off. But hardly was it

clear of the overhanging willows than the light of the bivouac fires made it visible to the sentry, who, shouting, 'To arms,' fired at us. No one was hit; but at the sound the whole camp was astir in a moment, and the gunners, whose pieces were ready loaded and trained on the river, honoured my boat with some cannon-shots. At the report my heart leapt for joy, for I knew that the Emperor and marshal would hear it. I turned my eyes toward the convent, with its lighted windows, of which I had, in spite of the distance, never lost sight. Probably all were open at this moment, but in one only could I perceive any increase of brilliancy; it was the great balcony window, which was as large as the doorway of a church, and sent from afar a flood of light over the stream. Evidently it had just been opened at the thunder of the cannon, and I said to myself, 'The Emperor and the marshals are doubtless on the balcony; they know that I have reached the enemy's camp, and are making vows for my safe return.' This thought raised my courage, and I heeded the cannon-balls not a bit. Indeed, they were not very dangerous, for the stream swept us along at such a pace that the gunners could not aim with any accuracy, and we must have been very unlucky to get hit. One shot would have done for us, but all fell harmless into the Danube. Soon I was out of range, and could reckon a successful issue to my enterprise. Still, all danger was not yet at an end. We had still to cross among the floating pine-stems, and more than once we struck on submerged islands, and were delayed by the branches of the poplars. At last we reached the right bank, more than two leagues below Mölk, and a new terror assailed me. I could see bivouac fires, and had no means of learning whether they belonged to a French regiment. The enemy had troops on both banks, and I knew that on the right bank Marshal Lannes' outposts were not far from Mölk, facing an Austrian corps, posted at Saint-Pölten.

Our army would doubtless go forward at daybreak, but was it already occupying this place? And were the fires that I saw those of friends or enemies? I was afraid that the current had taken me too far down, but the problem was solved by French cavalry trumpets sounding the reveillé. Our uncertainty being at an end, we rowed with all our strength to the shore, where in the dawning light we could see a village. As we drew near, the report of a carbine was heard, and a bullet whistled by our ears. It was evident that the French sentries took us for a hostile crew. I had not foreseen this possibility, and hardly knew how we were to succeed in getting recognised, till the

happy thought struck me of making my six grenadiers shout, 'Vive l'Empereur Napoléon!' This was, of course, no certain evidence that we were French, but it would attract the attention of the officers, who would have no fear of our small numbers, and would no doubt prevent the men from firing on us before they knew whether we were French or Austrians. A few moments later I came ashore, and I was received by Colonel Gautrin and the 9th Hussars, forming part of Lannes' division. If we had landed half a league lower down we should have tumbled into the enemy's pickets. The colonel lent me a horse, and gave me several wagons, in which I placed the grenadiers, the boatmen, and the prisoners, and the little cavalcade went off towards Mölk. As we went along, the corporal, at my orders, questioned the three Austrians, and I learnt with satisfaction that the camp whence I had brought them away belonged to the very division, General Hiller's, the position of which the Emperor was so anxious to learn. There was, therefore, no further doubt that that general had joined the archduke on the other side of the Danube. There was no longer any question of a battle on the road which we held, and Napoleon, having only the enemy's cavalry in front of him, could in perfect safety push his troops forward towards Vienna, from which we were but three easy marches distant. With this information I galloped forward, in order to bring it to the Emperor with the least possible delay.

When I reached the gate of the monastery, it was broad day. I found the approach blocked by the whole population of the little town of Mölk, and heard among the crowd the cries of the wives, children, and friends of the sailors whom I had carried off. In a moment I was surrounded by them, and was able to calm their anxiety by saying, in shocking bad German, 'Your friends are alive, and you will see them in a few moments.' A great cry of joy went up from the crowd, bringing out the officer in command of the guard at the gate. On seeing me he ran off in pursuance of orders to warn the aides-de-camp to let the Emperor know of my return. In an instant the whole palace was up. The good Marshal Lannes came to me, embraced me cordially, and carried me straight off to the Emperor, crying out, 'Here he is, sir; I knew he would come back. He has brought three prisoners from General Hiller's division.' Napoleon received me warmly, and though I was wet and muddy all over, he laid his hand on my shoulder, and did not forget to give his greatest sign of satisfaction by pinching my ear. I leave you to imagine how I was ques-

tioned! The Emperor wanted to know every incident of the adventure in detail, and when I had finished my story said, 'I am very well pleased with you, "Major" Marbot.' These words were equivalent to a commission, and my joy was full. At that moment, a chamberlain announced that breakfast was served, and as I was calculating on having to wait in the gallery until the Emperor had finished, he pointed with his finger towards the dining-room, and said, 'You will breakfast with me.' As this honour had never been paid to any officer of my rank, I was the more flattered. During breakfast I learnt that the Emperor and the marshal had not been to bed all night, and that when they heard the cannon on the opposite bank they had all rushed on to the balcony. The Emperor made me tell again the way in which I had surprised the three prisoners, and laughed much at the fright and surprise which they must have felt.

At last, the arrival of the wagons was announced, but they had much difficulty in making their way through the crowd, so eager were the people to see the boatmen. Napoleon, thinking this very natural, gave orders to open the gates, and let everybody come into the court. Soon after, the grenadiers, the boatmen, and the prisoners were led into the gallery. The Emperor, through his interpreter, first questioned the three Austrian soldiers, and learning with satisfaction that not only General Hiller's corps, but the whole of the archduke's army, were on the other bank he told Berthier to give the order for the troops to march at once on Saint-Pölten. Then, calling up the corporal and the five soldiers, he fastened the Cross on their breast, appointed them knights of the Empire, and gave them an annuity of 1,200 francs apiece. All the veterans wept for joy. Next came the boatmen's turn. The Emperor told them that, as the danger they had run was a good deal more than he had expected, it was only fair that he should increase their reward; so, instead of the 6,000 francs promised, 12,000 in gold were given to them on the spot. Nothing could express their delight; they kissed the hands of the Emperor and all present, crying, 'Now we are rich!' Napoleon laughingly asked the syndic if he would go the same journey for the same price the next night. But the man answered that, having escaped by miracle what seemed certain death, he would not undertake such a journey again even if his lordship, the abbot of Mölk, would give him the monastery and all its possessions. The boatmen withdrew, blessing the generosity of the French Emperor, and the grenadiers, eager to show off their decora-

tion before their comrades, were about to go off with their three prisoners, when Napoleon perceived that the Austrian servant was weeping bitterly. He reassured him as to his safety, but the poor lad replied, sobbing, that he knew the French treated their prisoners well, but that, as he had on him a belt, containing nearly all his captain's money, he was afraid that the officer would accuse him of deserting in order to rob him, and he was heart-broken at the thought. Touched by the worthy fellow's distress, the Emperor told him that he was free, and as soon as we were before Vienna, he would be passed through the outposts, and be able to return to his master. Then, taking a rouleau of 1,000 francs, he put it in the man's hand, saying, 'One must honour goodness wherever it is shown.' Lastly, the Emperor gave some pieces of gold to each of the other two prisoners, and ordered that they too should be sent back to the Austrian outposts, so that they might forget the fright which we had caused them, and that it might not be said that any soldiers, even enemies, had spoken to the Emperor of the French without receiving some benefit.

CHAPTER XLII.

On leaving the gallery I found the ante-room filled with generals and officers of the guard. My comrades were there also, and all congratulated me, both on the success of my expedition, and on the step which the Emperor had granted to me by addressing me as 'major.' It was not, however, till next month that I got my commission, by which time I had another wound to show for it. Do not, however, accuse the Emperor of ingratitude; during May his time was taken up by the events of the war, and as he always gave me the title of major he would naturally think that I considered myself as such.

As we moved from Mölk to Saint-Pölten, the Emperor and Marshal Lannes put many further questions to me as to the doings of that night. They halted opposite the old castle of Dürrenstein, on the further bank. This place had a double interest for us, both as commanding the scene of the memorable fight[1] when Marshal Mortier, separated from the rest of the French army in 1805, had to cut his way through the Russian troops, and as having, in the middle ages, been the prison of Richard Cœur de Lion. While studying these ruins, and meditating on the fate of the royal warrior who was so long shut up there, Napoleon fell into a deep reverie. Had he a presentiment that his enemies would one day shut him up, and that he would end his life as a captive?

Marshal Lannes, hearing several cannon-shots in the direction of Saint-Pölten, moved rapidly on that town, and a few charges took place in the streets between our advanced guard and a small force of light cavalry which the enemy still had on the right bank. All my colleagues being at the moment on duty, I happened to be alone with the marshal when we entered Saint-Pölten. Passing in front of a nunnery we saw the abbess come out with a crozier in her hand, followed by all her nuns. The holy women, terrified, were coming to seek protection. The marshal reassured them, and, as the enemy were flying and our troops in the occupation of the

[1] [See p. 147.]

town, he thought he might safely dismount. A scorching sun had followed the tempest of the previous night. The marshal had just covered three leagues at a gallop, and was very hot. The abbess invited him to come and take some refreshment. He accepted; and behold us two in the convent surrounded by some fifty nuns! In a moment the table was laid and a splendid luncheon served. I never saw such a profusion of syrups, preserves, sweetmeats of all sorts. We did them full justice, and the nuns filled our pockets with them, presenting several boxes to the marshal, who said that he would take them as a present from these ladies to his children. Alas! he was never to see his dear children again.

That night the Emperor and the marshal slept at Saint-Pölten; two days more brought us to Vienna, which we reached very early on May 10. The Emperor made his way at once to the royal palace at Schönbrunn, thus being at the gates of the Austrian capital twenty-seven days after leaving Paris. We had thought that the Archduke Charles would have hastened his march on the left bank, and crossed the river by the bridge of Spitz, so as to reach Vienna before us; but he was several days behind, and only a feeble garrison defended the capital. The city proper of Vienna is very small, but is surrounded by immense suburbs, which are enclosed by a single wall too weak to stop an army. The Archduke Maximilian, who commanded in Vienna, abandoned the suburbs, therefore, and withdrew with all the combatants behind the old fortifications of the town. If he had chosen to make use of the assistance offered by the courageous population, he might have held out for some time, but he did not do so, and on their arrival the French troops occupied the suburbs without striking a blow. Marshal Lannes, deceived by an incorrect report, and thinking that the enemy had also abandoned the city, sent Colonel Guéhéneuc in a hurry to tell the Emperor that we occupied Vienna, and Napoleon, eager to announce this great news, ordered M. Guéhéneuc to set out at once for Paris. But the place still held out, and when Lannes tried to enter at the head of a division, we were received with cannon-shots. General Tharreau was wounded and several soldiers killed. The marshal withdrew the troops into the suburbs, and decided to send Colonel Saint-Mars with a summons to the governor. He was accompanied by M. de la Grange, who, having been for a long time attached to the French embassy at Vienna, knew his way perfectly. A flag of truce ought to go forward alone, accompanied by a trumpeter; but instead of acting according to this

custom, Colonel Saint-Mars took three orderlies, and M. de la Grange the same number, so that with the trumpeter there were nine of them, which was far too many. The enemy thought, or pretended to think, that they were coming to inspect the fortifications rather than to bring a summons to surrender. A gate suddenly opened, and there came out a squad of Hungarian hussars, who charged sword in hand upon the party, wounded them all severely, and carried them prisoners into the town. The troopers who committed this act of barbarism belonged to the Szekler regiment, the same which, in 1799, had murdered the French plenipotentiaries, Roberjot and Bonnier, and severely wounded Jean Debry outside Rastadt.[1]

On hearing of the unworthy manner in which the Austrians had shed the blood of the party sent with the flag of truce, the Emperor came up indignantly, and sent for a great number of howitzers to bombard Vienna in the night. The defenders, meanwhile, had opened a terrible fire on the suburbs, and kept it up for twenty-four hours at the risk of killing their fellow-citizens.

On the morning of the 11th, the Emperor went round the outskirts of Vienna, and noticing that the Archduke Maximilian had committed the serious mistake of not lining the Prater with troops, he resolved to take possession of it by throwing a bridge over the small arm of the Danube. To this end two companies of voltigeurs crossed in boats and occupied the 'Lusthaus,' with the neighbouring wood to protect the construction of the bridge. This was finished during the night, and as soon as it was known in Vienna that the French held the Prater and could march thence towards the Spitz bridge, the only way of retreat open to the garrison, there was great agitation, which fresh events soon increased. By ten o'clock in the evening our gunners, covered by the solid buildings of the imperial stables, began to throw shells into the town, which soon was on fire in several quarters, and notably in the Graben.

It has been said, and repeated though wrongly by General Pelet, that the Archduchess Louisa lying ill at that time in her father's palace, the commander of the garrison gave notice of this to the Emperor of the French, and that orders were given to change the positions of the batteries.[2] This story is quite

[1] [See p. 18.]

[2] [Scott, 'Life of Napoleon,' chap. xlvii., gives the story on the authority of Bourrienne. Pelet also affirms the truth of it, and moralises a good deal on it.]

fictitious, for Marie Louise was not in Vienna during the attack, and if she had been the Austrian generals would certainly not have exposed their Emperor's daughter to the hazards of war, when she could with proper care have been taken in a few minutes to the other side of the Danube. But there are some people who will discover the marvellous everywhere, and have pleased themselves by making out that the life of the archduchess was saved by him whose throne she was shortly to share.

Our shells continued to pour upon the town till midnight, when Napoleon, leaving the task of directing the fire to the artillery generals, started with Marshal Lannes to return to Schönbrunn. It was bright moonlight, and, the road being good, the Emperor set off as usual at a gallop. He was riding for the first time a handsome horse presented to him by the King of Bavaria. His equerry, M. de Canisy, among whose duties was that of trying the Emperor's horses, had doubtless neglected this precaution, but affirmed that the horse was perfect. After a few paces the horse fell ; the Emperor rolled off and lay at full length without giving a sign of life. We thought he was dead, but he had only fainted. He was quickly picked up, and in spite of all that Marshal Lannes could say, insisted on riding the rest of the way. He took another mount, and started again at a gallop. On reaching the great court of the palace, he made all the staff and the squadron of his guard who had witnessed the accident draw up in a circle round him, and forbad anyone to speak of it. The secret, though entrusted to more than two hundred persons, half of whom were common troopers, was so religiously kept that the army and Europe never knew that Napoleon had nearly lost his life. The equerry, Count de Canisy, expected a severe reprimand, but Napoleon only punished him by ordering him to ride the Bavarian horse every day, and after the next day, when he had been off several times owing to the weakness of the animal's legs, the Emperor pardoned him, bidding him only examine better in future horses which he gave him to ride.

Finding his retreat threatened, and the capital in danger of being burnt to the ground, the archduke evacuated Vienna in the night and retired behind the main branch of the Danube, destroying the Spitz bridge. It was by this very bridge that the French army crossed the Danube in 1805, when, as I have related, Marshals Lannes and Murat got possession of it by a trick. After the departure of the troops, the populace were beginning to pillage the town, and the authorities sent General

O'Reilly and the archbishop, with some of the principal officials, to ask for aid from Napoleon. Upon this, several regiments entered as protectors rather than as conquerors. The citizens were disarmed, with the exception of the civic guard, who showed themselves as worthy of this mark of confidence as they were in 1805.

Marshal Lannes' head-quarters were in the magnificent palace of Prince Albert of Sachs-Teschen near the Kärnthner Thor. Prince Murat had occupied this during the Austerlitz campaign, but the marshal did not stay there, preferring to be lodged in a private house at Schönbrunn, where he could more readily communicate with the Emperor. In Vienna we found MM. Saint-Mars and De la Grange, with their escort all severely wounded. The marshal had M. Saint-Mars taken to Prince Albert's palace.

From the opening of the campaign of 1809, the English had done all in their power to stir up fresh enemies for Napoleon by raising the German populations against him and his allies. The first to rise in revolt were the Tyrolese,[1] who, taken from Austria and given to Bavaria by the treaties of 1805, saw an opportunity of returning to their former master. The Bavarians, under Marshal Lefebvre, fought many bloody engagements with the mountaineers, who, led by a simple innkeeper named Hofer, fought with heroic courage. But after some brilliant successes they were beaten by French troops coming from Italy, and their commandant, Hofer, was taken and shot.[2]

Prussia, humiliated by the defeat of Jena, but not daring, in spite of pressure from England, to run the risk of a fresh war with Napoleon, was willing enough to put a fresh spoke in his wheel by adopting a middle term between peace and war, such as is reprobated among all civilised nations. Major Schill, leaving Berlin in open day at the head of his regiment of hussars, swept the north of Germany, killing and plundering the French, and calling on the people to revolt. In this way he succeeded in forming a band of more than 600 men, at whose head he had the hardihood to attack, with support from the English fleet, the fortress of Stralsund, defended by the brave

[1] [The Tyrolese had quite enough cause to rise, without any English instigation. The pledges given for the maintenance of their old customs and liberties were freely violated by the Bavarian Government. As a matter of fact, the Tyrolese made the first advances to England.]

[2] [At Mantua, February 20, 1810, by special order from Napoleon, though a majority of the court which tried' him were in favour of sparing his life.]

General Gratien.[1] There was fighting in the streets, and Major Schill was killed. Many young men belonging to the best families of Prussia, who were taken fighting with him, were brought to trial by the Emperor's order, and sent off to Brest, condemned as thieves and assassins to penal servitude for life. The Prussian nation was angry enough at this treatment, but the Government, realising the true character of such acts of brigandage, did not venture to make any remonstrance, and contented itself with disavowing Schill and his troops, whom it would have rewarded had their enterprise brought about the rising of Germany.

The Prince of Brunswick-Oels, who had lost his states under the treaty of Tilsit and taken refuge in England, went to Lusatia, and, raising a band of 2,000 men carried on a guerilla war against the French and their allies, the Saxons. In Westphalia, Colonel Derneberg, an officer of King Jerome's guard, spread sedition in several districts, and even marched upon Cassel, with the intention of carrying off Jerome. Katt and several other Prussian officers raised bands in different places, as it was afterwards proved, with the tacit consent of the Prussian Government. If these various insurgent bodies, led by able and enterprising chiefs, had combined, the consequences to us might have been very awkward ; but they all broke up when the news came of the battle of Eckmühl and the capture of Vienna. The moment had not yet come to unite all the forces of Germany against Napoleon ; Russia was then our ally, and her agreement was lacking. She had even furnished us with a contingent of 20,000 men, who were acting, though very slackly, in Galicia. Russia, however, had no scruple at the peace about claiming her share of the Austrian spoils, with which she never again parted.

[1] [It seems really to have been in defending himself against the French, who were trying to dislodge him from Stralsund, that Schill perished, May 31.]

CHAPTER XLIII.

Napoleon had now concentrated the bulk of his forces around Vienna. Less fortunate, however, than in 1805, he found the Spitz bridge broken, and could not finish the war, nor reach his enemy, without passing the mighty stream of the Danube. At this period of the spring, the melting snow swells the stream till it becomes immense, and each of its branches is equal to a large river. The crossing consequently presented many difficulties, but as the stream flows among a great number of islands, some of which are very spacious, points can be found there on which to support bridges. After inspecting the bank closely, both above and below Vienna, the Emperor observed two spots favourable for the passage. The first by the isle of Schwarzelaken, opposite Nussdorf, half a league above Vienna; the second, the same distance below the town, opposite the village of Kaiserbersdorf, and crossing the great island of Lobau. Napoleon had both bridges set to work upon at once in order to distract the attention of the enemy. The first was entrusted to Lannes, the other to Masséna.

Marshal Lannes ordered General Saint-Hilaire to send 500 men to the island of Schwarzelaken, which is separated from the left bank by a small arm of the river, and almost reaches the end of the Spitz bridge. General Saint-Hilaire composed this force of men from two regiments under two majors, which was likely to interfere with combined action. Thus, on reaching the island these officers, not acting in concert, committed the great mistake of having no reserve in a large house well placed for protecting the landing of more troops. Then dashing on blindly, without organisation, they pursued some detachments of the enemy who were defending the island. These shortly received reinforcements from the left bank, and though our soldiers repulsed the first attacks with vigour, forming square and fighting with the bayonet, they were overwhelmed by numbers, more than half being killed and all the rest wounded and taken before support could reach them. The Emperor and Marshal Lannes arrived on the river-bank just in time to witness this disaster. They bitterly reproached General Saint-Hilaire, who, though he had much experience of war, had made the mistake of first composing his detachment badly, and then of letting it go before he was in a position to support it promptly by successive reinforcements. It is true he had few boats at

his disposal, but plenty more were coming up, for which he might have waited, and not acted precipitately. In this affair the Austrian troops were commanded by a French *émigré*, General Nordmann. He was very soon punished for having borne arms against his country, for he was killed by a cannon-ball at the battle of Wagram.

In despair at having caused the deaths of so many brave men, the Emperor and Marshal Lannes were hastening along the bank in a state of great agitation, when the marshal, catching his foot in a rope, fell into the Danube. Napoleon, who was alone with him at the moment, dashed into the water up to his waist, and had got the marshal out when we ran up to his assistance. This accident did not improve their tempers, already tried by the check which we had received, and which compelled the idea of a passage by the Schwarzelaken island to be given up. Having ascertained our purpose, the enemy had occupied it with several thousand men. Ebersdorf was now the only point at which we could cross the Danube. The village lies on the left bank, and in order to reach it we had to cross four branches of the river; the first being 500 yards in breadth, from which may be judged the immense length of the bridge that we had to throw across. Then comes an island, and then the second branch, the most rapid of all, 320 yards wide. The third stream is not more than 40. After passing these obstacles the huge island of Lobau is reached, which again is separated from the main land by the fourth branch, 140 yards across. We therefore had over 1,000 yards of water to traverse, and four bridges to build. The advantage of the crossing opposite Ebersdorf was that the Lobau island served as an immense place of arms, from which one could reach the left bank with more security, and further, as it formed a re-entering angle, offered a very advantageous debouchment upon the middle of the plain, which stretches between the villages of Gross-Aspern and Essling. No better configuration could be desired for the passage of an army.

Finding, when he arrived opposite Vienna, that Napoleon was checked by the river, the Archduke Charles hoped to prevent his crossing it by threatening his rear. He attacked our forces at Linz, and at Krems made arrangements to cross the river with all his army. But his troops were everywhere repulsed, and he confined himself to resisting our passage opposite Ebersdorf. Many obstacles were in the way of our building the bridges; we had to use boats of different shapes and dimensions, and materials lacking the necessary strength; we had no anchors, and had to supply their place with boxes

full of cannon-balls. The works were carried on under cover of the plantations, and protected by Masséna's division.

Lannes' division, posted over against Nussdorf, was to make apparent preparations for a crossing, in order to distract the enemy's attention. But this demonstration was merely a feint; and the marshal himself accompanied the Emperor on the 19th, when he went to Ebersdorf to direct the establishment of the bridges. After examining everything most thoroughly, and ascertaining that everything had been procured that was possible under the circumstances, Napoleon caused a brigade of Molitor's division to cross to the island of Lobau in eighty large boats and ten rafts. The breadth of the river and its roughness made this difficult, but once on the island the troops met with no obstacle; the enemy, preoccupied with the idea that we meant to cross above Vienna, having omitted to guard that point. The construction of the bridges lasted all night, and, the weather being fine, was completed by noon on the 20th, when all the divisions of Masséna's corps crossed to the island. Probably, such great works have never been completed in so short a time. By four o'clock in the afternoon the fourth branch of the Danube was bridged by Masséna's infantry divisions, commanded by Generals Legrand, Boudet, Carra-Saint-Cyr, and Molitor, followed by the light cavalry divisions under Lasalle and Marulaz, with General Espagne's cuirassiers, 25,000 men in all, debouched from the island, with the intention of occupying the villages of Essling and Aspern. Only a few squadrons of the enemy appeared on the horizon; the bulk of the Austrian army was still at Gerhardsdorf, but was about to march to prevent us from establishing ourselves on the left bank. Marshal Lannes' corps was to leave Nussdorf for Ebersdorf, but, being delayed in its passage through Vienna, it did not come up till late the next day. The infantry of the guard followed.

On the evening of May 20, the Emperor and Marshal Lannes being lodged in the only house which existed on the island, my comrades and I took up our quarters close by, in brilliant moonlight, on beautiful turf. It was a delicious night, and with the carelessness of soldiers, thinking nothing of the morrow's dangers, we chatted gaily, and sang the last new airs —among others, two which were then very popular in the army, being attributed to Queen Hortense. The words were very appropriate to our circumstances; there was :—

> 'You leave me, dear, to go where glory waits you;
> My loving heart accompanies your steps.'

And then again :—

'The gentle radiance of the evening star
Illumined with its beams the tents of France.'

Captain d'Albuquerque was the most joyous of us all, and after charming us with his fine voice, he sent us into fits of laughing by relating the most comical adventures of his adventurous life. Poor fellow! he little thought that the next day's sun would be his last—as little as we guessed that the plain which lay over against us on the other bank was soon to be watered with the blood of our kind marshal, and with that of almost every one of us.

On the morning of the 21st the Austrian lines showed themselves, and took up their position facing ours in front of Essling and Aspern. Marshal Masséna ought to have loop-holed the houses of these villages, and covered the approaches by field-works, but unluckily he had neglected to take this precaution. The Emperor found fault with him, but as the enemy was approaching, and there was no time to repair the omission, Napoleon did his best to supply it by covering the last bridge with a *tête de pont*, which he traced himself. If Marshal Lannes' corps, the imperial guard, and the other expected troops had been present, Napoleon would certainly not have given the archduke time to deploy, but would have attacked him on the spot. Having, however, only three divisions of infantry and four of cavalry to oppose to the enemy's large force, he was constrained, for the moment, to act on the defensive. To this end he rested his left wing, consisting of three divisions of infantry under Masséna, on the village of Aspern. The right wing, formed by Boudet's division, rested on the Danube, near the great wood lying between the river and the village of Essling, and occupied that village also. Lastly, the three cavalry divisions, and part of the artillery, under the orders of Marshal Bessières, formed the centre, spreading over the space which remained empty between Essling and Aspern. The Emperor compared his position to an entrenched camp, of which Aspern and Essling represented the bastions, united by a curtain formed by the cavalry and the artillery. The two villages, though not entrenched, were capable of a good defence, being built of masonry, surrounded by low banks, which protected them against the inundation of the Danube. The church and churchyard of Aspern could hold out for a long time. Essling had for its citadel a large enclosure and an immense stone house built of hewn stone. We found these points very useful.

Although the troops composing the right and centre did not

form any part of Lannes' corps, the Emperor wished in this difficulty to make use of the marshal's talents, and had entrusted the command-in-chief of them to him. He was heard to say to Marshal Bessières, much, as it appeared, to Bessières' annoyance, 'You are under the orders of Marshal Lannes.' I shall relate directly the serious quarrel to which this declaration gave rise, and how, greatly against my will, I got mixed up in it.

About 2 P.M. the Austrian army advanced upon us, and we were very hotly engaged. The cannonade was terrible; the enemy's force was so much superior to ours that they might easily have hurled us into the Danube by piercing the cavalry line which formed our only centre, and if the Emperor had been in the archduke's place he would certainly have taken that course. But the Austrian commander-in-chief was too methodical to act in this determined way, therefore instead of boldly massing a strong force in the direction of our *tête de pont*, he occupied the whole of the first day in attacking Aspern and Essling, which he carried and lost five or six times after murderous combats. As soon as one of these villages was occupied by the enemy, the Emperor sent up reserves to retake it, and if we were again driven from it, he took it again, though both places were on fire. During this alternation of successes and reverses, the Austrian cavalry several times threatened our centre, but ours repulsed it and returned to its place between the two villages, though terribly cut up by the enemy's artillery. Thus the action continued till ten in the evening, the French remaining masters of Essling and Aspern, while the Austrians, withdrawing their left and centre, did nothing but make some fruitless attacks on Aspern. They brought up, however, strong reinforcements for the morrow's action.

During this first day of the battle, though Marshal Lannes' staff, being always engaged in carrying orders to the most exposed points, had incurred great danger, we had yet no loss to deplore, and we were beginning to congratulate ourselves when, as the sun went down, the enemy, wishing to cover his retreat by a redoubled fire, sent a hail of projectiles at us. At that moment D'Albuquerque, La Bourdonnaye, and I, standing facing the marshal, were reporting to him upon orders which we had been sent to convey, having our backs consequently towards the enemy's guns. A ball struck poor D'Albuquerque in the loins, flinging him over the head of his horse, and laying him stone dead at the marshal's feet. 'There,' he exclaimed, 'is the end of the poor lad's romance! But he has at any rate died nobly.' A second ball passed between La Bourdonnaye's

saddle and the spine of his horse without touching either horse or rider, a really miraculous shot. But the front of the saddle-tree was so violently smashed between La Bourdonnaye's thighs, that the wood and the iron were forced into his flesh, and he suffered for a long time from this extraordinary wound.

I had been between my two comrades, and saw them both fall at the same moment. I went towards the escort to order some troopers to come and carry La Bourdonnaye away, but I had hardly gone a few steps when an aide-de-camp of General Boudet, having come forward to speak to the marshal, had his head taken off by a cannon-ball in the very spot which I had just left. Clearly this place was no longer tenable. We were right in front of one of the enemy's batteries, so the marshal, for all his courage, thought it advisable to move a couple of hundred yards to the right.

The last order which Marshal Lannes had given me to carry was addressed to Marshal Bessières, and gave rise to a brisk altercation between the two marshals, who hated each other cordially. In order to understand the scene which I am about to relate, it is necessary that you should know the reasons of this hatred.

General Bonaparte, when on his way to assume the command of the Army of Italy in 1796, took as his senior aide-de-camp Murat, whom he had just promoted to colonel, and for whom he had a great liking. Having, however, in the first actions noticed the military capacity, zeal, and courage of Lannes, then commanding the 4th of the line, he granted to that officer an equally large share of his esteem and friendship, thus exciting Murat's jealousy. When the two colonels had become generals of brigade, Bonaparte was accustomed, on critical occasions, to entrust to Murat the direction of the cavalry charges and put Lannes in command of the reserve of the grenadiers. Both did splendidly, and the army had nothing but praise for either. But between these gallant officers there grew up a rivalry which, if the truth must be told, was not at all displeasing to the commander-in-chief, as tending to stimulate their zeal and their desire of distinction. He would extol before Murat the achievements of General Lannes, and enlarge in Lannes' presence on the merits of Murat. The rivalry soon led to altercations, in which Bessières, then merely captain in General Bonaparte's Guides and in high favour with the commander, always took the part of his compatriot[1] Murat; while taking every opportunity, as Lannes was well aware, of depreciating him.

[1] [Bessières was born at Preissac, Murat at La Bastide-Fortunière, both in the department of the Lot.]

After the Italian campaigns Lannes and Murat accompanied Bonaparte to Egypt. About this time both conceived a wish to marry Caroline Bonaparte, and Bessières found an opportunity to injure Lannes' suit irretrievably. As a member of the administrative council, charged with the distribution of the military fund, he became aware that Lannes had exceeded the allowance for the outfit of his regiment, the consular guard, by 300,000 francs. He revealed this to Murat, who brought it to the ears of the First Consul. Lannes was dismissed from the command of the guard, and allowed a month to make up the deficit, which, without the generous aid of Augereau,[1] he would have found it hard to do. Napoleon afterwards received him back into favour; but meantime Murat had married Caroline Bonaparte. As may be supposed, Lannes never forgave Bessières, and the antipathy was in full vigour when they came in contact at the battle of Essling.

At the moment of the brisk cannonade which had just killed poor D'Albuquerque, Lannes, observing that the Austrians were making a retrograde movement, thought it a good opening for a cavalry charge. He called me to carry the order to Marshal Bessières, who, as I have said, had just been placed under his command by the Emperor. I was on duty; so the next aide-de-camp in course for service came up. It was De Viry. Marshal Lannes gave him the following order: 'Go and tell Marshal Bessières that I *order* him to *charge home*.' This expression, conveying that the charge must be pushed till the sabres are in the enemy's bodies, obviously is very like a reprimand; as implying that hitherto the cavalry has not acted with sufficient vigour. The expression 'I order,' employed by one marshal to another, was also very rough. Lannes used the two phrases intentionally.

Off went De Viry, fulfilled his instructions, and returned to the marshal, who asked, 'What did you say to Marshal Bessières?' 'I informed him that your Excellency begged him to order a general charge of the cavalry.' Lannes shrugged his soldiers, and cried, 'You are a baby; send another officer!' This time it was Labédoyère. The marshal knew he was of firmer character than De Viry, and gave him the same message, emphasising the expressions 'I order' and 'charge home.' Labédoyère did not see Lannes' intention, and did not like to repeat the words *verbatim* to Bessières; so he too employed a circumlocution. Accordingly when he came back and reported

[1] [See p. 115.]

the words he had used, Lannes turned his back on him. At that moment I galloped up to the staff. It was not my turn for duty, but the marshal called me and said, 'Marbot, Marshal Augereau assured me that you were a man I could count on. So far I have found his words justified by your conduct. I should like a further proof. Go and tell Marshal Bessières that I order him to charge home. You understand, sir, *home*.' As he spoke he poked me in the ribs with his finger. I perfectly understood that Lannes wished to mortify Bessières, first by taking a harsh way of reminding him that the Emperor had put him in a subordinate post to himself, and further by finding fault with his management of the cavalry. I was perturbed at being obliged to transmit offensive expressions to the other marshal. It was easy to foresee that they might have awkward results; but my immediate chief must be obeyed.

So I galloped off to the centre, wishing that one of the shots which were dropping thickly about might bowl over my horse, and give me a good excuse for not accomplishing my disagreeable mission! I approached Marshal Bessières with much respect, and begged to speak with him in private. 'Speak up, sir,' he replied stiffly. So I had to say in presence of his staff and a crowd of superior officers, 'Marshal Lannes directs me to tell your Excellency that he orders you to charge home.' Bessières angrily exclaimed, 'Is that the way to speak to a marshal, sir? *Orders! charge home!* You shall be severely punished for this rudeness.' I answered, 'Marshal, the more offensive the terms I have used seem to your Excellency, the more sure you may be that in using them I only obeyed my orders.' I saluted and returned to Lannes. 'Well, what did you say to Marshal Bessières?' 'That your Excellency ordered him to charge home.' 'Right; here is one aide-de-camp at any rate who understands me.' In spite of this compliment, you may imagine that I was very sorry to have had to deliver such a message. However, the cavalry charge came off; General d'Espagne was killed, but the result was very good. Whereon Lannes said, 'You see that my stern injunction has produced an excellent effect; but for it *M. le Maréchal* Bessières would have fiddled about all day.'

Night came on, and the battle ceased both in the centre and on our right, on which Lannes determined to join the Emperor, who was bivouacking within the works of the *tête de pont*. But hardly had we started, when the marshal, hearing brisk firing in Aspern, where Masséna was in command, wished to go and see what was taking place in the

village. He bade his staff go on to the Emperor's bivouac, and, taking only myself and an orderly, bade me guide him to Aspern, where I had been several times in the course of the day. I went in that direction; with the moon and the blaze of Essling and Aspern we had plenty of light. Still, as the frequent paths were apt to be hidden by the tall corn, and I was afraid of losing myself in it, I dismounted in order to find the way better. Soon the marshal dismounted also, and walked by my side, chatting about the day's fighting and the chances of that which would take place on the morrow. A quarter of an hour brought us close to Aspern, the approaches to which were lined by the bivouac fires of Masséna's troops. Wishing to speak to him, Marshal Lannes bade me go forward to ascertain his quarters. Before we had gone many steps I perceived Masséna walking in front of the camp with Marshal Bessières. The wound in my forehead which I had received in Spain prevented me from wearing a busby, and I was the only one among the marshal's aides-de-camp who had a cocked hat, and Bessières recognising me by this, but not yet noticing Marshal Lannes, came towards me, saying, 'Ah! it is you, sir; if what you said recently came from you alone, I will teach you to choose your expressions better when speaking to your superiors; if you were only obeying your marshal he shall give me satisfaction; and I bid you tell him so.' Then Marshal Lannes, leaping forward like a lion, passed in front of me, and seizing my arm, cried: 'Marbot, I owe you an apology; for though I believed I could be certain of your attachment, I had some doubts remaining as to the manner in which you had transmitted my orders to this gentleman; but I see that I was unfair to you.' Then, addressing Bessières, 'I wonder how you dare to find fault with one of my aides-de-camp. He was the first to mount on the walls at Ratisbon, he crossed the Danube at the risk of almost certain death, he has just been twice wounded in Spain, while there are some so-called soldiers who haven't had a scratch in their lives, and have got their promotion by playing the spy and informer on their comrades. What fault have you to find with this officer?' 'Sir,' said Bessières, 'your aide-de-camp came and told me that you ordered me to charge home; it appears to me that such expressions are unseemly!' 'They are quite right, sir, and it was I who dictated them; did not the Emperor tell you that you were under my orders?' Bessières replied with hesitation, 'The Emperor warned me that I must comply with your opinion.' 'Know, sir,' cried the marshal, 'that in military matters people do not comply, they

obey orders. If the Emperor had thought fit to place me under your command, I should have offered him my resignation. But so long as you are under mine, I shall give you orders and you will obey; otherwise I shall withdraw the command of the troops from you. As for charging home, I gave you the order because you did not do it, and because all the morning you were parading before the enemy without approaching him boldly.' 'But that's an insult,' said Bessières angrily; 'you shall give me satisfaction!' 'This very moment if you like!' cried Lannes, laying his hand on his sword.

During this discussion, old Masséna, interposing between the adversaries, sought to calm them, and not succeeding, he took the high tone in his turn. 'I am your senior, gentlemen; you are in my camp, and I shall not permit you to give my troops the scandalous spectacle of seeing two marshals draw on each other, and that in presence of the enemy. I summon you, therefore, in the name of the Emperor, to separate at once.' Then, adopting a gentler manner, he took Marshal Lannes by the arm, and led him to the further end of the bivouac, while Bessières returned to his own. You may suppose how distressed I was by this deplorable scene. Finally, Marshal Lannes, remounting, set off for the Emperor's bivouac where my comrades were already established. On reaching it he took Napoleon aside, and related what had happened. The Emperor at once sent for Marshal Bessières, whom he received sternly; then they went some distance away, and walked rapidly, the Emperor appearing to be reprimanding him severely. Marshal Bessières looked confused, and must have felt still more so when the Emperor sat down to dinner without inviting him, while he made Marshal Lannes take a seat at his right hand. My comrades and I were as sad this evening as we had been cheerful the night before. We had just seen poor D'Albuquerque killed; we had close beside us La Bourdonnaye horribly wounded, and groaning so as to break our hearts; and we were, besides, agitated with sad presentiments with regard to the result of the battle, of which we had seen only the first part. Moreover, we were on our legs all night, seeing Marshal Lannes' corps across the Danube, followed by the imperial guard. Meanwhile, the river was rising visibly; great trees, borne down by the flood, kept striking the bridges of boats, more than once breaking them. They were, however, promptly repaired, and, in spite of accidents, the troops which I have mentioned crossed the river, and were assembled on the battlefield by the time that the dawn of May 22 appeared, and the

roar of the cannon announced that the fight was being renewed.

Having at his disposal twice as many troops as on the previous day, the Emperor took steps to attack. Marshal Masséna and three of his infantry divisions remained in Aspern: the fourth, that of General Boudet, was left at Essling, under the command of Marshal Lannes, whose corps occupied the space between the two villages, having as its second line Bessières' cavalry, still under the orders of Lannes. The imperial guard formed the reserve. The Emperor's reprimand to Marshal Bessières had been so severe that, as soon as he saw Lannes, he came to ask him how he wished his troops to be placed. The marshal, wishing to establish his authority, replied, 'As you await my orders, sir, I order you to place them at such a point.' The expression was harsh, but one must remember how Bessières had behaved to Lannes in the days of the Consulate. He appeared hurt, but obeyed in silence.

The archduke, who might, by a vigorous attack, have pierced our weak line between Essling and Aspern the day before, renewed his efforts against those villages. But, as we had then resisted his whole army, with only Masséna's corps and part of our cavalry, we were all the more able to do so now that we had been joined by the imperial guard, Marshal Lannes' corps, and a division of cuirassiers. The Austrians were repulsed at all points; one of their columns, consisting of 1,000 men under General Weber, with six guns, was actually cut off and captured in Aspern.

So far the Emperor had been acting on the defensive, while the troops were crossing the river, but now that the numbers whom he had on the battlefield were doubled, and Marshal Davout's corps had assembled at Ebersdorf, and begun to cross, Napoleon judged that the time had come for assuming the offensive, and ordered Marshal Lannes at the head of the infantry divisions of Saint-Hilaire, Tharreau, Claparède, and Demont, followed by two divisions of cuirassiers, to break the enemy's centre. Lannes advanced proudly into the plain; nothing could resist him. In a moment he captured a battalion, five guns, and a flag. At first the Austrians retreated in good order, but as their centre was obliged to extend in proportion as we advanced it was at last broken through. Their troops fell into such disorder that we could see the officers and sergeants striking their soldiers with sticks, without being able to keep them in the ranks. If our advance had continued a few moments longer, it would have been all up with the Archduke's army.

CHAPTER XLIV.

EVERYTHING foretold a complete victory for us. Masséna and General Boudet were making ready to issue from Aspern and Essling, and to fall back upon the Austrians, when, to our surprise, an aide-de-camp from the Emperor came up with orders to Marshal Lannes to suspend his attacking movement. Trees and other objects floating in the Danube had caused a new breach in the bridge, and the arrival of Davout's troops and of the ammunition was delayed. After an hour's waiting the passage was repaired, and, though the enemy had profited by the delay to reinforce his centre, we renewed our attack. Again the Austrians were giving ground, when we heard that an immense piece of the great bridge had been carried away, and would take forty-eight hours to replace. The Emperor accordingly ordered Lannes to halt on the ground which he had taken.

This mishap, which hindered us from winning a brilliant victory, came about as follows. An Austrian officer, posted on look-out duty with some companies of Jägers in the islands above Aspern, had embarked in a small boat and gone out to the middle of the river to get a distant view of our troops crossing the bridges. Thus he witnessed the first breach caused by the floating trees, and the idea struck him that the same accident might be repeated as fast as we repaired the damages. So he had a number of beams and some fireboats launched down the stream, destroying some of our pontoons. But seeing that the engineers quickly replaced them, the officer caused a large floating mill to be set on fire and towed out into mid-stream. Borne down upon our principal bridge, it broke away a large part of it. Perceiving instantly that all hope of restoring the passage, and enabling Davout to reach the field of battle, was abandoned for that day; the Emperor ordered Lannes to withdraw his troops by degrees to their former position, between Aspern and Essling, so that, resting on those villages, they might hold their ground against the enemy. The movement was being carried out in perfect order, when the archduke

who had at first been puzzled by our retreat, heard that the bridge was broken, and saw a chance of driving the French army into the Danube. With this view he sent his cavalry against the most advanced of our divisions, that of Saint-Hilaire. Our battalions repulsed the charge, and the enemy then opened upon them with a heavy artillery fire. Just then I was bearing an order from Lannes to General Saint-Hilaire. Hardly had I reached him when a storm of grape-shot struck his staff, killing several officers and smashing the general's leg. He died under amputation. I was myself struck in the thigh by a grape-shot, which tore out a piece of flesh as large as an egg, but the wound was not dangerous, and I was able to return and report to the marshal. I found him with the Emperor, who, seeing me covered with blood, remarked, 'Your turn comes round pretty often!' Both he and the marshal felt the loss of General Saint-Hilaire keenly.

Seeing the division attacked at all points, the marshal went to take command of it. He withdrew it slowly, often facing towards the enemy, until our right rested on Essling, which was still held by Boudet's division. Though my wound was not yet dressed, I thought I ought to go with the marshal. In the course of the retreat, my friend De Viry had his shoulder smashed by a bullet, and I had some difficulty in getting him brought to the entrenchments.

The position was very critical. Compelled to act on the defensive, the Emperor posted his army in an arc, having the Danube for its chord, our right resting on the river in rear of Essling, our left in rear of Aspern. Under pain of being driven into the river we had to keep up the fight for the rest of the day; it was now 9 A.M., and not till nightfall should we be able to retire to the island of Lobau by the weak bridge over the small branch. The archduke, recognising the weakness of our position, repeatedly attacked the two villages and the centre, but fortunately for us, did not think of forcing our weakest point, between Essling and the Danube, by which a strong column pushed vigorously forward might have reached the *tête de pont* and destroyed us. All along our lines the slaughter was terrible, but absolutely necessary to save the honour of France and the portion of the army which had crossed the Danube.

To check the energy of the enemy's attacks, Marshal Lannes frequently resumed the offensive against their centre, and forced it back, but they soon returned with reinforcements. On one of these occasions, Labédoyère got a grape-shot in his

foot, and Watteville a dislocated shoulder, his horse being killed under him by a cannon-ball. Thus of all the staff Sub-lieutenant Le Couteulx and I remained, and I could not leave the marshal alone with that young officer, who, though brave enough, had no experience. Wishing to retain me, he said, 'Go, and get dressed; if you can then sit your horse, come back to me.' I went to the first field-hospital; the crowd of wounded was enormous, and lint had run short. A doctor put into my wound some of the coarse tow which is used as wadding for cannon, and the rough fibres gave me a good deal of pain. Under other circumstances I should have gone to the rear, but now every man had to display all his energy, and I went back to the marshal. I found him very anxious, having just heard that the Austrians had taken half of Aspern from Masséna. That village was taken and retaken many times. Essling was being vigorously attacked at that very instant, and bravely defended by Boudet's division. So fierce were both sides that they were fighting in the midst of the burning houses, and barricading themselves with the hacked corpses which blocked the streets. Five times the Hungarian grenadiers were driven back, but their sixth attack succeeded. They got possession of the village, all but the great granary, into which General Boudet withdrew, as into a citadel.

While this fighting was going on, the marshal sent me several times into Essling. The danger was considerable, but in the excitement I even forgot the pain of my wound.

At length, perceiving that, repeating his fault of the day before, he was wasting his forces against our two bastions, Essling and Aspern, and neglecting our centre, where a well-sustained attack with his reserve would bring him to our bridge and secure the destruction of the French army, the archduke launched large masses of cavalry, supported by heavy columns of infantry, on this point. Marshal Lannes, not surprised by this display of force, gave orders that the Austrians should be allowed to approach within gun-shot range and received them with such a furious fire of musketry and grape that they halted, nor could the stimulating presence of the archduke induce them to come a single pace nearer. They could perceive behind our line the bearskin caps of the Old Guard, which was advancing in a stately column, with shouldered arms.

Cleverly profiting by the enemy's hesitation, Marshal Lannes caused Bessières to charge them at the head of two divisions of cavalry. Part of the Austrian battalions and

squadrons were overthrown, and the archduke, finding his attack on our centre unsuccessful, thought to profit at least by the advantage which the capture of Essling offered. At that moment, however, the Emperor ordered his aide-de-camp, General Mouton, to retake the village. Hurling himself upon the Hungarian grenadiers, he drove them out, and remained master of Essling, a feat which covered himself and the Young Guard with glory, and earned him later on the title of Count of Lobau.

These successes on our part having slackened the enemy's ardour, the archduke, whose losses were enormous, abandoned the hope of forcing our position, and for the rest of the day only kept up an ineffectual combat. This terrible thirty hours' battle was drawing to its end. It was high time, for our ammunition was nearly exhausted. Had it not been for the activity with which Davout kept sending it over in small boats from the right bank, it would have failed utterly. As, however, the boats came few and far between, the Emperor bade us economise, and our fire became mere sharpshooting practice, the enemy at the same time reducing his.

While the two armies were mutually watching each other but not moving, and the commanders in groups in rear of the battalions were discussing the events of the day, Marshal Lannes, weary with riding, had dismounted, and was walking about with Major-General Pouzet. Just then a spent ball struck the general on the head, laying him dead at the marshal's feet. He had been formerly a sergeant in the Champagne Regiment, and at the beginning of the Revolution was at the camp of Le Miral when my father commanded there. At the same time the battalion of volunteers from the Gers, in which Lannes was sub-lieutenant, formed part of the division. The sergeants of the old line regiments having the task of instructing the volunteers, that of Gers fell to the share of Pouzet. Quickly perceiving the young sub-lieutenant's talents, he did not confine himself to teaching him the manual exercise, but gave him such instruction in manœuvres that he became an excellent tactician. Attributing his first promotion to Pouzet's instruction, Lannes was much attached to him, and in proportion as he got on himself he used his interest to advance his friend. His grief, then, at seeing him fall dead was very great.

At that moment we were a little in advance of the tile-works, to the left, near Essling. In his emotion, wishing to get away from the corpse, the marshal went a hundred paces in the direction of Enzersdorf, and seated himself, deep in

thought, on the further side of a ditch, from which he could watch the troops. A quarter of an hour later, four soldiers laboriously carrying in a cloak a dead officer whose face could not be seen stopped to rest in front of the marshal. The cloak fell open, and Lannes recognised Pouzet. 'Oh!' he cried, 'is this terrible sight going to follow me everywhere?' Getting up, he went and sat down at the edge of another ditch, his hand over his eyes and his legs crossed. As he sat there, plunged in gloomy meditation, a small three-pound shot, fired from a gun at Enzersdorf, ricochetted, and struck him just where his legs crossed. The knee-pan of one was smashed, and the back sinews of the other torn. Instantly I rushed towards the marshal, who said, 'I am wounded; it's nothing much; give me your hand to help me up.' He tried to rise, but could not. The infantry regiments in front of us sent some men at once to carry the marshal to an ambulance, but, having neither stretcher nor cloak, we had to take him in our arms, an attitude which caused him horrible pain. Then a sergeant, seeing in the distance the soldiers who were carrying General Pouzet's body, ran and asked them for the cloak in which he was wrapped. We were about to lay the marshal on it, so as to carry him with less pain; but he recognised the cloak, and said to me, 'This is my poor friend's; it is covered with his blood; I will not use it. Drag me along rather how you can.' Not far off I saw a clump of trees; I sent M. le Couteulx and some grenadiers there, and they presently returned with a stretcher covered with boughs. We carried the marshal to the *tête de pont*, where the chief surgeons proceeded to dress his wound, first holding a private consultation, in which they could not agree as to what should be done. Dr. Larrey was in favour of amputating the leg of which the knee-pan was broken; another, whose name I forget, wanted to cut off both; while Dr. Yvan, from whom I heard these details, was against any amputation. This surgeon, who had long known the marshal, asserted that his firmness of character gave some chance of a cure, while an operation performed in such hot weather would inevitably bring him to the grave. Larrey was the senior surgeon of the army, and his opinion prevailed. One of the marshal's legs was amputated. He bore the operation with great courage; it was hardly over when the Emperor came up. The interview was most touching. The Emperor, kneeling beside the stretcher, wept as he embraced the marshal, whose blood soon stained his white kerseymere waistcoat.

Some evil-disposed persons have written that Marshal

Lannes addressed the Emperor reproachfully, and implored him to make war no longer; but as I was at that moment supporting the marshal's shoulders and heard everything that he said, I can assert that this was not the case.[1] On the contrary, the marshal felt the proofs of the Emperor's concern very deeply, and when the latter was obliged to go away to give the orders required for the safety of the army, and said, 'You will live, my friend, you will live,' the marshal replied, pressing his hand, 'I trust I may, if I can still be of use to France and to your Majesty.'

In spite of his cruel sufferings the marshal did not forget the position of his troops, but every moment asked for news of them. He learnt with pleasure that as the enemy did not venture to pursue they were profiting by nightfall to return to the island of Lobau. His anxiety extended to his aides-de-camp who had been wounded near him; he asked how they were going on, and when he knew that I had been dressed with coarse tow he asked Dr. Larrey to examine my wound. I should have liked to carry the marshal to Ebersdorf, on the right bank, but the broken bridge prevented this, and we did not dare to put him on board of a frail boat. He was therefore compelled to pass the night on the island, where, for want of a mattress, I borrowed a dozen cavalry cloaks to make him a bed. We were short of everything, and had not even good water to give the marshal, who was parched with thirst. We offered him Danube water, but the flood had made this so muddy that he could not drink it, and said, resignedly, 'We are like sailors who die of thirst with water all round them.' My desire to soothe his sufferings led me to devise a new kind of filter. One of the marshal's valets, who had remained on the island, had with him a small portmanteau containing linen. I took one of the marshal's shirts of fine material; we tied all the openings with string except one, and, plunging into the Danube the kind of bag thus made, we drew it out full, and then hung it over a large can, so that the water filtering through the linen was cleared of nearly all the earthy particles. The poor marshal, who had followed my operations with eager eyes, was at last able to get a draught, which, if not perfect, was at least fresh and clear, and was very grateful for my invention. The care which I was bestowing on my illustrious patient could not avert my fears for the fate which might befall him if the Austrians were to cross the small arm of the river and attack us on the island.

[1] [General Pelet also contradicts the story.]

What could I then do for him? I thought for a moment that my fears were going to be realised, for a battery near Enzersdorf sent several shots at us; but the fire did not last long.

In the archduke's position two courses were open to him: either to make a fierce attack upon the French divisions which remained on the field of battle, or, if this seemed too bold a move, he might without risk to his troops place his artillery on the bank of the small arm from Enzersdorf to Aspern, and by bombarding the island annihilate the 40,000 French who were crowded on it. Happily for us, the enemy's commander-in-chief took neither of these courses; and Masséna, to whom Napoleon had entrusted the command of so much of the army as was still on the left bank, was able during the night to evacuate the villages of Aspern and Essling unmolested, and bring his wounded, all his troops, and all his artillery over to the island. The bridge across the small arm was taken up, and by daybreak on the 23rd all our regiments who had been engaged were safe on the island; nor during the forty-five days which Masséna's occupation of it lasted did the enemy fire another shot in that direction.

A boat of some size was sent by the Emperor on the 23rd to bring Marshal Lannes to the right bank. I put him and our wounded comrades into it, and when we reached Ebersdorf, sent the latter to Vienna in the charge of M. le Couteulx, remaining myself alone with the marshal. He was taken to one of the best houses in Ebersdorf, and I sent for all his people to come and join him there.

Meanwhile our troops massed on the island of Lobau, short of food and ammunition, reduced to live on horseflesh, and cut off from the right bank by the great breadth of the river, were in a most critical position. It was feared that the archduke's inaction was feigned, and it was expected that at any moment he might ascend the Danube to a point above Vienna, and, crossing the river, attack us in rear by the right bank, at the same time raising the capital against us. In that case, Marshal Davout's corps, which was guarding Vienna and Ebersdorf, would certainly have made a stout resistance. But could it have beaten the whole of the enemy's army? And, meanwhile, what would have become of the troops shut up on the island?

The Emperor profited cleverly by the time which the Austrians left him, and never was his prodigious activity better employed. Aided by the indefatigable Davout and his divisions, he did on the 23rd alone more than another general could have

got done in a week. A well-organised service of boats brought provisions and ammunition to the island; the wounded were all got away to Vienna; hospitals were established; materials in great quantity collected to repair the bridges, build fresh ones, and protect them by a stockade; a hundred guns of the largest calibre, captured in Vienna, were taken to Ebersdorf. By the 24th, communication with the island was re-established, and the Emperor marched Lannes' division, the guard, and all the cavalry on to the right bank, leaving only Masséna's corps to fortify the island, and put in battery the big guns which had been brought up. This point being secured, the Emperor ordered Bernadotte's army corps and the various divisions of the Germanic Confederation to come on to Vienna, which would enable him to repulse the archduke in the event of his venturing across the river to attack us. A few days later we received a powerful reinforcement. A French army under Eugène Beauharnais, coming from Italy, took up its position on our right. I have not yet mentioned this army. At the beginning of the campaign it had experienced a check at Sacile; but a renewed attack on the part of the French resulted in the defeat of the enemy, who were driven across the Alps. The Archduke John had been thrown back across the Danube into Hungary, which opened the communications between the Viceroy and the Grand Army, of which his troops henceforward formed the right wing. posted opposite Pressburg.

CHAPTER XLV.

I HAVE promised not to weary you with details of strategy, but as the battle of Essling and the unforeseen events which hindered us from winning a brilliant victory have been widely discussed, I think I ought to make some remarks upon the causes which led to that result, all the more so that they have been misdescribed by a Frenchman, who has imputed to the Emperor mistakes which he did not commit. General Rogniart, in his work 'Considerations on the Art of War,' asserts that at Essling Napoleon fell thoughtlessly into a trap which the archduke set for him when he ordered the centre of his army to retire and draw the French forward while he was having the bridges broken, their destruction having been already arranged. Not only is this assertion contrary to the truth, but, as I think I showed in my criticism addressed to General Rogniart in 1820, it is absurd. As a matter of fact if the archduke knew that he had under his hand the means of destroying the bridges, why did he not have them broken on the evening of the 21st, when not more than 25,000 French troops had crossed to the left bank, whom, with the 125,000 at his disposal, he could make sure of destroying or capturing? Would not this have been better than leaving the passage of the river open to Napoleon all night, thus enabling him to double the force which he could oppose to the enemy? If, again, he had arranged the destruction of the bridges, why did he during the afternoon of the 21st lose four or five thousand men in attacking the villages of Essling and Aspern? It would have been much wiser to wait till Masséna's corps, having its retreat cut off, should be obliged to capitulate. Why, finally, did he on the morning of the 22nd renew his furious attacks upon Essling and Aspern instead of waiting till the bridges were broken? Clearly, because he did not know that it was in his power to destroy them. It was only chance and the flooded state of the river which brought down upon the pontoons the floating trees which caused the first partial breaches, while later on the quick wit of an Austrian officer arranged for the destruction of the great bridge

by launching into the current boats laden with burning wood, and lastly, a huge floating mill, which carried away nearly the whole bridge. But nothing had been arranged beforehand, and this was admitted to us afterwards by several of the enemy's generals, whom we saw on the occasion of the armistice at Znaym.

If any doubt remained on the subject it would be entirely destroyed by the following irresistible argument. Of all the military decorations in the Austrian Empire, the most difficult to obtain was that of Maria Theresa, for it was only granted to an officer who could show that he had done more than his duty. He had to ask for the decoration himself, and if he failed he was for ever debarred from demanding it again. Now, in spite of the strictness of this regulation, the officer of the Austrian Jägers obtained the Cross of Maria Theresa, which shows undoubtedly that he had acted on an inspiration of his own, and not by the archduke's orders. This reasoning, which I have developed in my critical remarks on General Rogniart's work, was especially approved by Napoleon when he read my book and Rogniart's at St. Helena. It was doubtless to punish that general for the partiality shown to our enemies that the Emperor, when leaving me a legacy of 100,000 francs, added in his will, 'I bid Colonel Marbot continue to write in defence of the glories of the French armies, and to the confusion of calumniators and apostates.'

As soon as the troops had effected their retreat into the island of Lobau, and on to the right bank of the Danube, the Emperor took up his quarters at Ebersdorf in order to survey the arrangements for a fresh crossing. Not one bridge, but three, were to be constructed, all having a strong stockade of piles up stream from them to withstand any floating objects which the enemy might launch at them. The care which the Emperor bestowed on these important works did not prevent him from coming twice a day to visit Marshal Lannes. For the first four days after his wound the marshal went on as well as possible; he preserved perfect equanimity, and conversed very calmly. So far was he from renouncing the service of his country, as some writers have stated, that he made plans for the future. Learning that Mesler, the celebrated Viennese mechanician, had made for the Austrian general, Count Palfy, an artificial leg with which he could walk and ride as well as ever, the marshal asked me to write to that artist, asking him to come and measure him for a leg. But the oppressive heat which we had experienced for some time became more intense, with disastrous results to the wounded man. He was attacked

by high fever, accompanied with terrible delirium. The critical situation in which he had left the army was always on his mind, and he fancied himself still on the battlefield. He would call his aides-de-camp in a loud voice, bidding one tell the cuirassiers to charge, another to bring the artillery to such and such a point, and so on. In vain did Dr. Yvan and I try to soothe him; he did not understand us. His excitement kept increasing; he no longer recognised even the Emperor. This condition lasted several days without his getting a moment's sleep or resting from his imaginary combats. At length, in the night between the 29th and 30th, he left off giving his orders; a great weakness succeeded the delirium; he recovered all his mental faculties, recognised me, pressed my hand, spoke of his wife, his five children, his father, and, as I was very near his pillow, he rested his head on my shoulder, appeared to be falling asleep, and passed away with a sigh.[1] It was daybreak on May 30. A few moments later the Emperor arrived for his morning visit. I thought it my duty to meet him and let him know of the sad event, cautioning him not to enter the infected atmosphere of the room. But Napoleon, putting me aside, advanced to the marshal's body, which he embraced, bathing it with tears, and saying repeatedly, 'What a loss for France and for me!' Berthier tried in vain to draw him away from the sad sight; he remained for more than an hour, and only yielded when Berthier pointed out that General Bertrand and the engineer officers were waiting to execute an important piece of work, for which he had himself fixed the time. As he went away he expressed his satisfaction with the unremitting care which I had taken of the marshal, and bade me have the body embalmed, and everything got ready for its transport to France.

My grief, already very keen, was increased by the necessity of attending the operation in order to draw up a report of it, and of superintending the removal of the body. It was a sad day for me, and I reflected much on the destiny of this man, who, gifted only with a quick intelligence and a dauntless courage, had raised himself by merit from the lowest to the highest rank of society, and now in full enjoyment of his honours and vast wealth, had just ended his career in a foreign land, far from his family, in the arms of none but his aide-de-

[1] [It will be observed that Marbot's report of the last days and death of Marshal Lannes differs materially from the sensational account given by Sir Walter Scott, mainly, it would appear, on the authority of Napoleon himself (as reported by Las Cases) and Savary. But see Lanfrey, iii. p. 403.]

camp. Both physical and moral shocks had impaired my health. My wound, a slight one at first, and easy to cure if I could have had a few days' rest of mind and body, had become terribly inflamed during these ten days of anxiety and fatigue; for no one, not even his valets, had rendered me any efficient help in tending to the marshal. One of them, a kind of dandy, had gone off the first day, under the plea that the stench of the wounds made him ill. The other was more zealous, but really fell ill from this cause, and I was obliged to send for a hospital man, who was as willing as possible, but whose unfamiliar face and dress seemed to displease the marshal, so that I had to give him everything. This day and night watching made my wound worse; my thigh was much swollen, and I could hardly stand, when I determined at length to go to Vienna and get proper treatment. In the Archduke Albert's palace I found all my wounded comrades. The Emperor had not lost sight of us, for he instructed the chief court surgeon, who lodged at Schönbrunn, to look after Marshal Lannes' aides-de-camp, and this good Dr. Franck came to see us twice daily. On examining my wound he thought it in a very bad state, and prescribed entire rest. But in spite of his advice I often walked through the passages to see my friend De Viry, who was kept in bed by a much worse wound than mine. Indeed, I soon had the grief of losing this excellent comrade, to my infinite regret; and as I was the only aide-de-camp who knew his father, the duty of announcing to him the fatal news fell to me. The poor old man, broken-hearted, survived his son but a short time.

While unable to move I read much, and wrote down the most important facts of the recent campaign, together with some anecdotes which I had heard about it. Here is one of the most interesting. Two years before the establishment of the Empire, there existed no rank in French regiments intermediate between that of colonel and that of major.[1] Bonaparte, then First Consul, wishing to fill this gap, which had been caused by a decree of the Convention, consulted the Council, and it was recognised to be necessary that some rank should be created, with functions equivalent to that of the old lieutenant-colonels. The next point was to settle the title, and Bonaparte was decided against the proposal of Berthier and some councillors that the former name should be restored. He pointed out that under the old system, the

[1] [*Chef de bataillon*, or *d'escadron*.]

colonels being great noblemen who passed their life at court and seldom appeared with their regiments, the administration and instruction of these had to be entrusted to officers acting as their substitutes, to whom it was quite fit and proper to give the title of lieutenant-colonel, since they were the real commanders of the regiments of which the colonels were merely the titular chiefs. But now that things had changed, and the colonels were the real commanders of their corps, it would not do to create a rivalry between them and the officers under consideration. If, however, the name of lieutenant-colonel were given to them, they would be brought too near their chiefs, because their juniors would for brevity address them as 'Colonel'; nor was it seemly that when a soldier said he was going to the colonel he should have to be asked, 'To which?' The First Consul accordingly proposed to give the second officer in a regiment the title of *major*. His opinion prevailed, and the rank of lieutenant-colonel was restored, but not the name. This looks like a distinction without a difference; but it is not so, as the following story shows.

On the first day of the battle of Essling the Austrians had captured the village of that name, and the French regiment which had been posted there was retiring in some disorder before a much superior force, when, being sent to that point by Marshal Lannes, I learnt that the colonel had just been killed. The officers and men, resolved to avenge him and retake Essling, had, under the command of the *major*, promptly re-formed their ranks, still under fire, at no great distance from the houses. I hastened to tell the marshal the state of affairs; but when I said in a low voice, 'The colonel is dead,' Napoleon, who was close by, frowned, uttering a 'Hush!' which made me silent; and though unable to explain to myself how he proposed to improve the occasion, I could see that for the moment he did not wish to know that the colonel was killed.

The Emperor, who has been accused of lacking physical courage, galloped off, in spite of the bullets which were whistling round us, reached the centre of the regiment, and asked where the colonel was. No one replied, till Napoleon having repeated his question, several soldiers answered, 'He has just been killed.' 'I did not ask if he was dead, but where he is.' Then a timid voice announced that he had been left in the village. 'What, soldiers!' said Napoleon. 'You have left your colonel's body in the hands of the enemy? Know that a brave regiment should always be able to show its eagle and its colonel, dead or living. You have left your colonel in that

village; go and find him.' The *major*, catching Napoleon's thought, cried, 'Yes, we are dishonoured, if we do not bring back our colonel!' and off he went at the double. The regiment followed, with a shout of 'Long live the Emperor!' exterminated some hundred Austrians, remained master of the position, and got back the body of its colonel, which a grenadier company brought and laid down at the Emperor's feet. As you quite understand, the Emperor cared nothing about having the poor officer's body, but he wished to attain the double object of retaking the village, and impressing upon the troops that the colonel is a second flag, which a good regiment should never abandon. This conviction in moments of difficulty exalts the courage of the men and leads them to fight obstinately around their chief, dead or living. Then, turning to Prince Berthier, the Emperor reminded him of the discussion in the council, adding, 'If when I asked for the colonel there had been a lieutenant-colonel instead of the *major*, they would have said, "Here he is," and the effect which I wished to produce would have been less impressive, for in the soldier's eyes lieutenant-colonel and colonel are pretty nearly synonymous titles.' Then the Emperor sent word to the *major*, who had just taken his regiment along so bravely, that he promoted him to colonel.

From what I have just told you you may judge the magic power which Napoleon exercised over his troops, since his presence and a few words were enough to send them into any danger: and you can also see with what readiness he could turn to advantage any incident of the battlefield. This episode seemed to me all the more worth recording, since the title of lieutenant-colonel was mistakenly revived under the Restoration.

Here is another anecdote, the chief interest of which is that it gave occasion to a very sensible remark on the part of Lannes. While the infantry of our corps was crossing the bridges and the cavalry was awaiting its turn, a major of the 7th Chasseurs, named M. Hulot d'Hozery, now a general [we saw him in 1814 on the staff of the Emperor Alexander, when the foreign armies entered Paris], being a very brave man, and urged by curiosity to find out what was taking place on the field of battle, left his regiment at Ebersdorf, and crossed the river in a boat. On the other side he mounted a horse, and came caracoling as an amateur about our staff near Essling, and at that very moment a cannon-ball took off his arm. As soon as he had been taken to the ambulance for amputation, Marshal Lannes said to us, 'Remember, gentle-

men, that in war swagger is always out of place, and that true courage consists in facing the dangers to which one is exposed at one's post, and not in going and parading in the middle of a fight otherwise than at the summons of duty.'

I think I should now give a more complete biography of Marshal Lannes. He was born in 1769 at Lectoure, a little town in Gascony. His father was a mere working dyer, with three sons and one daughter. Lectoure was then a bishop's see, and a certain vicar-general, observing the intelligence and good conduct of the dyer's eldest son, placed him in the seminary, where he took orders, and in course of time became a vicar-general himself. He was a worthy man, and set himself to teach his younger brothers, the second of whom, the future marshal, profited by his lessons so far as he could in the intervals of assisting his father in the work of his trade. When the Revolution broke out, his education was limited to reading, writing, and arithmetic. The youngest brother had not much talent, and, after trying to help him in a military career, the marshal advised him to quit the service, got him married well for his province, and established him in his native town. The girl, who, when her second brother became general, was still a child, was sent to a good school by him, afterwards dowered by him, and well married.

Lannes was of middle height, but very well built; his countenance pleasant and expressive; his eyes small, but indicating a keen wit; his disposition very kind, but passionate, until he succeeded in overcoming it; his ambition boundless, his activity extraordinary, and his courage undaunted. After passing his youth as a dyer's apprentice he saw the military career open before him, and advanced in it with giant steps. Carried away by the enthusiasm which in 1791 had decided most men of his age to fly to the defence of their country unjustly attacked, he enrolled himself in the volunteers of the Gers, and served as a grenadier until his comrades were led by his good behaviour, his zeal, and his quick wit to nominate him sub-lieutenant. From that moment he gave himself up to unremitting study, and even when he was marshal he passed part of his nights in work, so that he became a very fairly educated man. He saw his first service under my father at the camp of Le Miral, and afterwards in the army of the Eastern Pyrenees, where his intrepidity and uncommon intelligence quickly raised him to the rank of major, which he held at the time when my father's division passed under the command of

General Augereau. After a bloody engagement, in which Lannes had covered himself with glory, Augereau got him made colonel. Having been wounded in this affair, Lannes was obliged to pass some months at Perpignan, where he was quartered with a rich banker, M. Méric. Winning the esteem of all the family by his pleasant manners, the young officer married Mlle. Méric—a much better match than at that time he could have hoped for.

Peace having been concluded between France and Spain in 1795, Lannes went with Augereau's division to Italy, and was placed as supernumerary with the 4th half-brigade of the line, which, in the absence of its regular chief, was really commanded by him at the time when Bonaparte came to take command of the army. He quickly recognised Lannes' merit, so when a decree of the Directory put all the supernumerary officers on half-pay, Bonaparte took upon himself to keep him in Italy, where, though not officially belonging to the army, he was twice wounded in the campaigns of 1796 and 1797. But for the perspicacity of the commander-in-chief, Lannes would have been removed from the service, and have buried his military talents in the office of his father-in-law, and France would have had one great captain the less. When Bonaparte led an army into Egypt he took Lannes with him. He had now become major-general, and consequently was officially restored to the active list.

The new general distinguished himself everywhere, and was so seriously wounded at the assault of Acre that his troops thought him dead. I have told you how his life was saved by a captain of grenadiers, who, at the risk of his own life, dragged him to the end of the trenches. In this affair Lannes got a bullet through his neck, and ever afterwards carried his head bent towards his left shoulder, and had a certain discomfort in his larynx. He had scarcely recovered from this wound when he was overtaken by a great sorrow. He learnt that his wife, whom he had not seen for two years, had just been delivered of a boy. A lawsuit ensued, and he obtained a divorce.

Lannes left Egypt with Napoleon, and followed him to Paris. After the 18th of Brumaire he went with him to Saint-Cloud. He distinguished himself in the campaign of Marengo, and saved the army at the action of Montebello, where a great part of our army engaged in the gorges of the Alps would have been unable to emerge into the plain if Lannes' courage and masterly manœuvres had not got the enemy out of the way. His conduct on this occasion earned him later on the title of

Duke of Montebello. It was on his return from this campaign that Lannes conceived a hope of marrying Caroline Bonaparte. I have told you how the intrigues of Bessières swayed the balance in favour of Murat. Lannes was then appointed ambassador at Lisbon, and married Mlle. Guéhéneuc, who brought him a handsome dowry, which, added to a fortunate windfall, put his affairs on a satisfactory footing. By a regulation of old standing, a French ambassador on his first arrival at Lisbon was entitled to pass in free of duty all goods on board the vessel which brought him. General Lannes, in pursuance of the usual practice, ceded this right to a commercial firm for 300,000 francs. Some time afterwards, on the birth of a boy—who was, in later days, Minister of Marine under Louis Philippe [1]—the Prince Regent of Portugal asked to be god-father. On the christening-day, in the course of a visit to the rooms of the palace in which Brazilian curiosities were kept, he took Lannes to a room where were boxes full of precious stones, and, opening one, he took out three double handfuls of uncut diamonds, and put them into the general's hat, with the words, 'The first for my godson, the second for the ambassadress his mother, and the third for the ambassador.' From this time Lannes, from whom I had the story, was really a wealthy man.

Nor did the favour of fortune stop there. When on ascending the throne in 1804, the First Consul created the dignity of Marshal of France, Lannes naturally was among the first to receive it, with the title of Duke of Montebello. At the Camp of Boulogne he commanded the 5th corps of the Grand Army, and led it the next year into Austria. At Austerlitz he specially distinguished himself, being in command of the left wing. So, too, in the following year, at Saalfeld, Jena, Pultusk, and Friedland. In 1808 and 1809, in Spain, he assisted the Emperor bravely at Burgos, won the battle of Tudela by himself, and captured Saragossa. Then, without resting, he hastened back to Germany. His exploits there I have just narrated, at Eckmühl, Ratisbon, and finally at Essling, where this modern Bayard closed his glorious career.

That you may better appreciate his character, I may relate an incident which shows what pains he took with himself. In ordinary intercourse he was calm and gentle; but on the battlefield he would work himself up into a fury the

[1] [Napoléon Auguste Lannes, Duke of Montebello, born 1801, was ambassador at Naples, Minister (for a few weeks) of Foreign Affairs, and later of Marine under Louis Philippe, and ambassador at St. Petersburg, 1858-1864. He died in 1874.]

moment his orders were not well carried out. Now it happened during the battle of Burgos that at the decisive moment, a captain of artillery, having misunderstood a manœuvre which had been enjoined, took his battery in exactly the wrong direction. The marshal, seeing this, galloped off, and in his wrath gave the officer a severe reprimand in the Emperor's presence. As he went away he heard Napoleon say something, of which he only caught the first words, 'That fellow Lannes.' He returned pensive, and, taking me aside at the first possible moment, required me by his confidence in me, and my affection for him, to tell him the whole of the Emperor's remark. I replied frankly: 'His Majesty said, "That fellow Lannes has all the qualities which go to make a great captain, but he never will be one, because he cannot control his temper, and gets in a rage even with subalterns, and an army-leader can have no greater fault."' The marshal's heart was so set on being a great captain that he resolved to acquire the one qualification which, in the opinion of so good a judge as the Emperor, he lacked; and from that moment I never again saw him out of temper even when, as often happened, especially at Saragossa, his orders were ill-performed. When he perceived a serious fault, the first impulse of his fiery nature towards an outbreak was in an instant checked by his firm will. He would turn pale, and his hands would clench, but he made his remarks as calmly as a phlegmatic man could do, as the following instance may show. Anyone with the least experience of war knows that when soldiers want to clean their muskets, instead of drawing the charges with the proper screw, they have the bad and dangerous habit of letting them off in the air. In spite of all prohibition, it happened, during the siege of Saragossa, that some infantry men were emptying their muskets in this fashion at a moment when the marshal was passing near their camp. One of the bullets, striking the bridle of his horse, cut the reins close to his hand. The soldier was arrested for breach of the regulations; but the marshal, checking his impulse to speak sharply, only said, 'See what you lay yourself open to, and think how sorry you would be if you had killed me,' and had the man set free. It requires strength of mind to master one's character in this way.

As I am writing the history of my life, I have to be constantly coming back to personal details. I may, therefore, remind you that after the death of Marshal Lannes I had gone to Vienna to get my wound attended to. I lay on my bed deep in sad meditations; for not only did I regret for his own

sake the marshal who had been so kind to me, but I could not disguise from myself that the loss of such a supporter changed my position vastly. The Emperor had, indeed, told me at Mölk that he appointed me major, and both he and Berthier addressed me as such; but, as in the bustle of the war, no commissions had been drawn out, I was actually still only a captain. My fears for my future were terminated by a piece of good luck. My comrade, La Bourdonnaye, far more seriously wounded than I, lay in the next room to mine, and we often chatted through the open door. M. Mounier, the Emperor's secretary, afterwards peer of France, often came to see La Bourdonnaye, and I made his acquaintance. Having often heard my performances and my wounds spoken of at head-quarters, and seeing me with a fresh mark of the enemy's fire, he asked what reward I had got. 'None,' said I. 'It can only be by an oversight,' replied he, 'for I am sure I saw your name for one of the commissions lying in the Emperor's portfolio.' Next day I learnt from him that he had placed the commission under the Emperor's eyes, and that the Emperor had written on the margin, 'This officer shall enter the mounted chasseurs of my guard as major'; thus granting me a great and unprecedented favour, for the officers of the guard had army rank superior to that which they held in the corps. In thus admitting me as major, Napoleon raised me two steps at once, and gave me the rank of *major*, or lieutenant-colonel in the line, which was magnificent. I was not, however, dazzled by this advantage, although, as the guard did garrison duty in Paris, I should be able to see more of my mother; but Marshal Bessières was general in command of the guard, and not only did he give a bad reception to officers whom he had not recommended himself, but I feared his ill-will on account of the incident at Essling.

I was in a painful state of uncertainty when Prince Eugène, Viceroy of Italy, arrived at Vienna, and took up his quarters in the Archduke Albert's palace. One day Masséna came to visit him, and, wishing to show kindness to Marshal Lannes' aides-de-camp, came up to our rooms and stayed some time with me, as he had known me at the time of the siege of Genoa. I told him my difficulty, and he replied, 'No doubt it would be a great advantage to you to enter the guard, but you would expose yourself to Marshal Bessières' vengeance. Come and be my aide-de-camp, and you shall be received like a child of my family, as the son of a good general who died when fighting under me, and I will take care of your promotion.' Enticed by these promises, I accepted; Masséna went off at once to the Emperor,

who finally agreed to his request, and sent me on June 18 my commission as major to be aide-de-camp to Masséna.

Delighted though I was at being at length a field-officer, it was not long before I was sorry for having accepted Masséna's offer. An hour after my appointment as aide-de-camp came Marshal Bessières bringing with his own hands my nomination to the guard; he assured me that he would have much pleasure in receiving me in the corps, as he knew that in bearing the order to him on the field of Essling I was only obeying the instructions of Marshal Lannes. I was deeply grateful for this kind and straightforward action, and much regretted that I had been so prompt in engaging myself to Masséna; but it was too late to go back on my decision. I feared at the time that my promotion would suffer, but luckily it was not so, for M. Mounier, who took my place in the guard, was still only major when I became colonel. It is true that he passed the next two years in Paris, while I was in the thick of the fire and got two more wounds.

Napoleon rewarded Marshal Lannes' staff plentifully. Among others, Saint-Mars became colonel of the 3rd Chasseurs, and Labédoyère aide-de-camp to Prince Eugène. As for me, as soon as I could get to Schönbrunn to thank the Emperor for my promotion, his Majesty did me the honour of saying, 'I should have liked to have you in my guard; however, as Marshal Masséna wants you for his aide-de-camp, and that suits you, I have no objection; but in order to show in a special way how pleased I am with you, I appoint you knight of the Empire, with an annuity of 2,000 francs.' If I had dared I should have begged the Emperor to return to his first purpose, and admit me into his guard; but how could I tell him the reason why I had originally declined? That being impossible, I confined myself to thanking him, but it was with a sore heart. However, having to resign myself to the position into which my own hot-headedness had brought me, I put aside useless regrets, and took all the more care of my wound, so that I might be fit to accompany my new marshal in the fighting which was sure to follow our next passage of the Danube.

CHAPTER XLVI.

By the end of June I was well enough to join Masséna's head-quarters on the isle of Lobau, and was greeted in friendly fashion by my new comrades. The staff was numerous, and contained several officers of distinction. Before resuming my tale of the campaign of 1809 I should like to make you acquainted with one of them who played an important part in the events preceding the battle of Wagram—Colonel de Sainte-Croix.

Charles d'Escorches de Sainte-Croix, son of the marquis of that name, once Louis XVI.'s ambassador to the Porte, was in all respects a most remarkable man. His military career was short enough, but of wonderful brilliancy. His family and mine were connected, and we were most intimate friends; indeed, the desire of serving with him had been a strong inducement to me to accept Masséna's proposal. Keen as was Sainte-Croix's natural love of war, it was late before he could gratify it, since he was destined for diplomacy, and all through the Peace of Amiens was employed under Talleyrand in the Foreign Office. When the campaign of 1805 opened he was twenty-three, and therefore too old to enter the *École Militaire*, so that but for a lucky circumstance he might never have entered the army.

After Austerlitz Napoleon formed from the prisoners there taken two foreign regiments for the French service. These not being governed by the same regulations as the national forces, he was able to officer them as he pleased, appointing even to field rank men who had had no military experience, but belonging to good families, and showing a zeal for the service. By this abnormal system of promotion Napoleon got the benefit of attaching to himself some hundred and fifty young men of education and fortune who otherwise would have been corrupted by a slothful life at Paris. The first foreign regiment was commanded by the nephew of the famous La Tour d'Auvergne; the second by a great German noble, the Prince of Eisenburg; and they were known by the names of their chiefs. They were organised on the model of the foreign regiments in the French service before the Revolution, and as the Foreign

Minister had always been responsible for the levying of these troops, Napoleon ordered Talleyrand to search the archives for precedents. Knowing young Sainte-Croix's military tastes, the Minister assigned the work to him, and, in addition to tracing the history of the old regiments, he proposed modifications to suit the altered conditions. Struck with the good sense displayed in this scheme, and knowing the author's desire to serve in the new corps, the Emperor appointed him first major, and, soon after, lieutenant-colonel in the La Tour d'Auvergne Regiment. It was a great favour, as the Emperor had never seen Sainte-Croix; but it went near to spoil his prospects at the outset.

A M. de M——, cousin to the Emperor, had hoped for the rank of lieutenant-colonel, but only got that of major. Hurt in his vanity, he sought a quarrel with Sainte-Croix on a frivolous pretext. As he was a first-rate performer with every kind of weapon, his friends were sure of his victory and escorted him in a cavalcade to the Bois de Boulogne; but only one accompanied him to the spot where his adversary, with one second, awaited him. They fought with pistols, and M. de M—— received a bullet in the breast which laid him dead; upon which, his second, instead of going to fetch help, and thinking only of the consequences which this tragic end of a relation of the Emperor might entail on himself, fled through the wood and far away from Paris, without returning for his horse or informing the dead man's friends. Sainte-Croix and his friends also returned to the city, and the body was left alone on the ground. Meanwhile, those who were awaiting M. de M——'s return, hearing the shots but seeing no more of him, went into the wood, and found the poor young man's body. It happened that in falling he had fractured his skull on a hard stump, and when his friends, after examining the wound in the breast, saw another in the head, they thought that Sainte-Croix, after wounding his opponent with a bullet from his pistol, had finished him by smashing his skull with the butt. This seemed to explain the disappearance of the dead man's second, on the supposition that he lacked either strength or courage to prevent the assassination. With this notion in their minds, they hastened to Saint-Cloud, and imparted it to the Empress, who went to the Emperor demanding justice. An order was given to arrest Sainte-Croix, and, as he had in no way concealed himself, he was locked up. Doubtless he would have lain in prison while a long inquiry was held had not Fouché, a family friend, being sure that he would not have committed such a crime, made an active search for the missing

second. Being found and brought to Paris, he honestly reported what had happened, and further, the officials charged with the inquiry discovered near the corpse a stump of a root stained with blood, and having hair adhering to it. Sainte-Croix's innocence was admitted; he was set free, and went to join his regiment in Italy.

M. de la Tour D'Auvergne was an estimable man, but with no great turn for military matters. Sainte-Croix, therefore, had the organising of the new regiment, and did it with such zeal that he made it one of the finest corps in the army. He distinguished himself in Calabria, and earned the great regard of Masséna, who, after the battle of Eylau, sent for him to Poland, though it was quite against the regulations to take an officer, especially a major, from his regiment. When he reached Warsaw he was presented by Masséna to the Emperor, who, recalling the death of M. de M——, received him coldly, expressing to the marshal his dissatisfaction at his having been brought away from his regiment. The Emperor had another reason for his unfriendly welcome. Although of short stature himself, Napoleon had a great preference for tall, strong, masculine men; but Sainte-Croix was small, slight, and with the face of a pretty fair-complexioned woman. In this feeble-seeming body, however, there was a soul of steel, an heroic courage, and a restless activity. The Emperor soon recognised these qualities, but, thinking that it was enough for Sainte-Croix to have started with the rank of *major*, he did nothing for him during that campaign. When, however, in 1809, Masséna was put in command of an army corps, he remembered how the Emperor had reproved him for attaching Sainte-Croix to his staff without leave, and asked and obtained him for his aide-de-camp.

In one of the actions preceding our entry into Vienna Sainte-Croix took a flag from the enemy, and the Emperor made him colonel; at Essling he showed wonderful courage and intelligence, and the Emperor's prejudice against him was completely destroyed by the important services which he rendered to Masséna's corps when acting as advanced guard on the isle of Lobau. The Emperor went every day to inspect the fortifications on the island, remaining on foot for seven or eight hours. These long walks fatigued Masséna, who was already a little infirm, and General Becker, chief of the staff, often could not answer the Emperor's questions, while Sainte-Croix, with his wonderful activity and intelligence, knew everything, foresaw everything, and could give the most exact information. Thus Napoleon fell into the way of applying to him, and gradually

Sainte-Croix became, if not *de jure*, certainly *de facto* chief of the staff to the army corps which was defending the island of Lobau.

It would have been so easy for the Austrians to bombard us out of this island, that the Emperor went away each evening with regret, and passed each night in cruel anxiety. As soon as he awoke he wished to have news of Masséna's corps, and Sainte-Croix had orders to report to him in his room every morning at daybreak. Thus, every night the colonel went on foot round the vast island, visiting our outposts and examining those of the enemy; then, mounting his horse, he hurried over the two leagues to Schönbrunn. The aides-de-camp had orders to bring him at once to the Emperor's bedroom, and the Emperor, dressing in his presence, would discuss the position of the two armies. Then they would gallop off to the island; the Emperor would inspect the works all day, often mounting a high double ladder, which the ingenious Sainte-Croix had had set up as an observatory, and whence the movements of the enemy's troops on the left bank could be seen, and in the evening Sainte-Croix would escort the Emperor back to Schönbrunn. For forty-four days in extreme heat he worked in this way, without being weary or slackening his activity for a moment. Often Napoleon would call him to council, when discussing with Marshals Masséna and Berthier the best way of getting the army across to the left bank. The passage would have to be made at a different point to the former one, since it was known that that place had been strongly entrenched by the archduke. Sainte-Croix proposed to turn the enemy's defences by crossing opposite Enzersdorf, which course was adopted.

In short, Napoleon's opinion of his merit was so high that he said one day to the Russian envoy, M. de Czernicheff, 'I have never since I have been in command of armies met a more capable officer, nor one who understood my thought quicker and executed it better. He reminds me of Marshal Lannes and General Desaix, and if he is not struck down by a thunderbolt France and Europe will be astonished at the distance which I shall take him.' These words were very soon known everywhere, and it was expected that Sainte-Croix would quickly be a marshal. But, unhappily, the thunderbolt did strike him; he was killed the next year by a cannon-ball at the gates of Lisbon.

Napoleon, though he usually kept at a distance the commanders whom he most esteemed, now and again was familiar with one of them, and even amused himself by inciting him to frank repartees. Thus Lasalle, Junot, and Rapp used to say

to the Emperor whatever came into their heads. The two first, who used to ruin themselves every other year, would thus relate their pranks to Napoleon, who always paid their debts. Sainte-Croix was too clever and too decorous to abuse the favour which he enjoyed; still, when the Emperor drove him to it, he was capable of prompt and decisive repartee. Thus, when Napoleon, who would often take his arm, as they walked through the sands of the isle of Lobau, said to him, on one of their numerous expeditions, 'I remember that after your duel with my wife's cousin I wanted to shoot you; I admit that it would have been a mistake and a very great loss.' 'That is quite true, sir,' answered Sainte-Croix, 'and I am certain that now, when your Majesty knows me better, you wouldn't exchange me for one of the Empress's cousins.' 'For one, indeed!' said the Emperor; 'you may say for the lot of them.' Another day, when Sainte-Croix was present, as Napoleon got up the latter said, as he drank a glass of cold water, 'I believe that Schönbrunn in German means "beautiful spring"; it was rightly named, for the spring in the park produces delicious water, which I drink every morning. Do you like cold water?' 'No, indeed, sir; I prefer a good glass of bordeaux or champagne.' Then the Emperor, turning to his valet, said, 'Send the colonel a hundred bottles of bordeaux and the same number of champagne,' and that very evening, as Masséna's aides-de-camp were dining in their bivouac under the trees, we saw several mules, from the imperial stables, arriving with two hundred bottles of excellent wine for Sainte-Croix, and we drank the Emperor's health therein.

THE MEMOIRS

OF

BARON DE MARBOT

LATE
LIEUTENANT-GENERAL IN THE FRENCH ARMY

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

ARTHUR JOHN BUTLER
LATE FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

WITH PORTRAIT

NEW IMPRESSION

IN TWO VOLUMES. VOL. II.

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CHAPTER XLVII.

As the moment approached for crossing the Danube again, the Austrians watched more assiduously the bank of the small arm of the river which lay between us and them. They fortified Enzersdorf, and if a group of French soldiers came too near the part of the island opposite that village their outposts would fire upon them; but they took no notice of parties of two or three. The Emperor wished to have a near view of the enemy's preparations, and it has been said that in order to do so without danger he disguised himself as a private, and did sentry's duty. This report is incorrect; the real fact was as follows. The Emperor and Marshal Masséna, wearing sergeants' great-coats, and followed by Sainte-Croix in a private's uniform, went close up to the bank. The colonel stripped himself, and went into the water, while Napoleon and Masséna, to still any suspicion on the part of the enemy, took off their coats as though they too proposed to bathe, and then examined at their ease the point where they wished to throw the bridges across. The Austrians were so accustomed to see our soldiers come in little parties to bathe at that place that they remained quietly lying on the grass. This fact shows that in war commanders ought strictly to forbid this kind of truce, and marking off of neutral points, which the troops on either side often establish for their respective convenience.

Having settled to cross the river at this spot, the Emperor decided that several bridges should be constructed there; but as it was more than probable that on the alarm being given by the outposts the Austrian troops posted at Enzersdorf would hasten up to oppose the construction of the bridges, it was arranged that 2,500 grenadiers should first be transported to the other bank, and should at once attack Enzersdorf to occupy the garrison, and prevent their interfering with our works and hindering our passage. This being settled, the Emperor said to Masséna, 'As this leading column will be specially exposed, we must compose it of our best troops, and select a brave and capable colonel to command them.' 'But, sir, that is my job,'

said Sainte-Croix. 'How so?' replied the Emperor, who probably asked the question only to draw the answer which he got. 'Why,' said the colonel, 'because of all the officers on the island I am the one who has had the most tiring work for six weeks past. I have been on my legs carrying out your orders day and night; and I beg that your Majesty will be kind enough to give me in return the command of the 2,500 grenadiers who are to make the first landing on the enemy's bank.' 'Well, you shall have it,' replied Napoleon, much pleased with this noble daring; and the final arrangements for the crossing having been made, the attack was fixed for the night of July 4.

Before that time came two important events happened in our army corps. Lieutenant-General Becker was a good officer, though indolent, but it was his fault to criticise everything, and he allowed himself openly to disapprove Napoleon's plan of attack. On hearing of it the Emperor sent him back to France. We shall see how he avenged himself in 1815.[1] General Fririon became chief of the staff; a capable man, but without the firmness required in one acting under Masséna. The other event nearly deprived the Emperor of the aid of Masséna himself in the coming battle. One day, as he and Napoleon were riding round the island, the marshal's horse put its foot in a hole and fell, injuring its rider's leg so that he could not keep his saddle. This was the more annoying that the battle was to take place on the same ground as that of Essling, which Masséna of course knew well. He showed, however, his determination by asserting that in spite of his pain he would be taken on to the field in a litter, like Marshal Saxe at Fontenoy. A litter was got ready; but it struck the marshal, upon a remark which I ventured to make, that this mode of transport was rather pretentious and not so safe as a light carriage, which, with four good horses, could get him about the ground more quickly than men. It was therefore arranged that he should go thus, accompanied by his surgeon, Dr. Brisset, who changed the compresses every hour with perfect coolness under fire during the two days which the battle of Wagram lasted, and in the subsequent fights.

Knowing that the enemy was expecting him to cross as before between Aspern and Essling, and that it was important to conceal his plan of turning their position by crossing opposite

[1] [Unfortunately, General Marbot's Memoirs stop short of 1815. General Becker was directed by the Provisional Government to escort Napoleon to Rochefort after his second abdication, and discharged the duty so considerately, that they parted in the most affectionate manner.]

Enzersdorf, Napoleon had a careful watch kept over all who entered the island by the great bridges connecting it with Ebersdorf. Everyone on the island must have learnt the secret towards the end of the time; but as it seemed certain that none were on it but French soldiers or officers' servants, who were all guarded, no danger was apprehended from inquisitiveness on the enemy's part. This, as it turned out, was a mistake; for the archduke had contrived to introduce a spy among us. Just when he was about to give information of the point which we were going to attack, an anonymous letter, written in Hungarian, was brought by a little girl to the Emperor's Mameluke, Roustan, with the warning that it was important and urgent. It was at first supposed to be a begging letter; but the interpreters soon translated it, and informed the Emperor. He came at once to the island, and on arriving, ordered all works to be suspended, and every soul—troops, staffs, commissaries, butchers, bakers, canteen men, even officers' servants—to be drawn up on parade. As soon as everyone was in the ranks, the Emperor announced that a spy had found his way into the island, hoping to escape notice among 30,000 men; and now that they were all in their places he ordered every man to look at his neighbours to right and left. The success of this plan was instantaneous. In the midst of a dead silence, two soldiers were heard to cry, 'Here is a man we don't know.' He was arrested and examined, and admitted that he had disguised himself in a French uniform, taken from men killed at Essling. This wretch had been born at Paris, and appeared very well educated. Having ruined himself at play, he had fled to Austria to escape his creditors, and there had offered himself as spy to the Austrian staff. A small boat used to take him across the Danube at night, landing him a league below Ebersdorf, and fetch him back the next night on a given signal. He had already been frequently on the island, and had accompanied detachments of our troops going to fetch provisions or materials from Ebersdorf. In order to avoid notice, he always went to places where there was a crowd, and worked with the soldiers at the entrenchments. He got his meals at the canteen, passed the nights near the camps, and in the morning, armed with a spade as though on his way to join a working party, he would go over all the island, and examine the works, lying down among the osiers to make hurried sketches of them. The next night he would go and make his report to the Austrians, and come back to continue his observations. He was brought before a court martial and condemned to death; but the bitter regret which

he expressed for having served the enemies of France disposed the Emperor to commute the penalty. When, however, the spy proposed to deceive the archduke by going to make a false report on what he had seen, and coming back to tell the French what the Austrians were doing, the Emperor, disgusted at this new piece of infamy, abandoned him to his fate, and let him be shot.

Meanwhile the day of the great battle was drawing on. Napoleon had assembled round Ebersdorf the Army of Italy, the corps of Davout and Bernadotte with the guard, and transformed the island of Lobau into a vast fortress. Three strong bridges secured the passage of the large arm of the Danube, and everything was ready for throwing several across the small arm. To confirm the archduke in the belief that he intended to cross again between Essling and Aspern, Napoleon had the small bridge by which we had retreated after the battle of Essling reconstructed after the night of July 1, and sent across two divisions whose skirmishers might attract the attention of the enemy while all was making ready for our attack on Enzersdorf. It is hard to understand how the archduke could have supposed that Napoleon would make a front attack upon the huge fortifications with which he had surrounded Essling and Aspern; this would indeed have been taking the bull by the horns.

The second and third were passed by both sides in preparation. The French army, to the number of 150,000 men, was massed on the isle of Lobau; the archduke assembled an equal force on the left bank, where his troops, posted in two lines, formed an immense arc, overlapping those parts of the island which were opposite to them. The right-hand end of this arc rested on the Danube at Floridsdorf; their centre occupied the villages of Essling and Aspern, which were strongly entrenched, and connected by works armed with many guns. Finally, the left of the arc was at Gross-Enzersdorf, with a strong detachment at Mühlleiten. The archduke, therefore, was watching all the points of the island by which we could emerge; but as, for some unexplained reason, he had made up his mind that Napoleon would attack his centre, crossing the little arm of the Danube where he had done in May, the Austrian commander had concentrated his whole force in the wide plains which extend from those villages as far as Deutsch-Wagram and Markgrafen-Neusiedel, a large village on the Russbach stream, the steep banks of which, commanded by high ground, offer an excellent defensive position. His right was weak, and his left still weaker, because, though he had ordered his brother

the Archduke John, commanding the Army of Hungary, with his 35,000 men, to be by the morning of July 5 at Unter-Siebenbrunn and in touch on the left with the second line of the main army, this order was not carried out.

In pursuance of the Emperor's instructions, the French army began its attack at 9 P.M. on July 5. Just then a tremendous storm burst; the night was of the darkest, the rain fell in torrents and the noise of the thunder mingled with that of our artillery, which, sheltered from the enemy's shot by an epaulement, aimed all its fire at Essling and Aspern. Thus confirmed in the belief that we were going to land at that point, the archduke turned all his attention thither, without troubling himself about Enzersdorf, upon which the bulk of our force was marching. As soon as the first shots were heard Marshal Masséna, though still in much pain, was placed in a small open carriage and, surrounded by his aides-de-camp, was driven towards the point where the first attack was to be made. The Emperor soon joined us. He was in good spirits and said to the marshal: 'I am delighted at this storm. What a fine night for us! The Austrians cannot see our preparations to cross opposite Enzersdorf, and they will know nothing of them till we have carried that important position; by which time our bridges will be placed and part of my army formed on the bank which they think we are defending.'

In fact Colonel Sainte-Croix, after having landed his 2,500 grenadiers in silence, took up his ground on the enemy's flank in front of Enzersdorf. A regiment of Croats was bivouacking at this point. Attacked unawares, they defended themselves obstinately with the bayonet; but our grenadiers, inspirited by the voice of Sainte-Croix, who had thrown himself into the hottest of the scuffle, drove back the enemy, who retreated in disorder upon Enzersdorf. That large village, surrounded by a loopholed wall, having in front of it a dyke cut in the form of a parapet, was full of infantry, while all the entrances were covered by small earthworks. To carry the village was all the more difficult, because the houses had been burnt down and the garrison might any moment be supported by General Nordmann's brigade posted a little in rear between this village and that of Mühlleiten. But no obstacle checked Sainte-Croix, who at the head of his grenadiers carried the outer works, pursued the enemy at the sword's point, and entered pell-mell with them into the redan which covered the south gate. The gate was closed, Sainte-Croix drove it in under a hail of bullets from the loopholed walls. Once masters of this passage, the colonel

and his soldiers dashed into the village, while the garrison, weakened by its enormous losses, took refuge in the castle. But at sight of the scaling ladders which Sainte-Croix ordered up, the Austrian commander capitulated. Thus Sainte-Croix, to whom this fine feat of arms did the greatest honour, remained master of Enzersdorf, to the great satisfaction of the Emperor, whose plans were admirably served by its capture. He ordered eight bridges to be at once thrown over the small arm between the island and Enzersdorf. The first of these bridges was an invention of the Emperor's own. It was made in four sections, connected by hinges so as to allow it to turn and follow the windings of the bank; one end was fixed to the trees on the island, while the other was guided towards the opposite bank by the help of a cable carried by a boat. Swinging to the current, this new style of bridge turned on itself, made a complete wheel to the right, and was ready for use in a moment. In a quarter of an hour the other seven were fixed, enabling Napoleon rapidly to bring over to the left bank the corps of Masséna, Oudinot, Bernadotte, Davout, and Marmont, Prince Eugène's army, the artillery reserve, all the cavalry, and finally the guard.

While the Emperor was thus profiting by the capture of Enzersdorf, the archduke, still convinced that his enemy intended to debouch between Essling and Aspern, was wasting him time and his ammunition in hurling shot and shell on to the part of the island which faced those villages, under the impression that he was causing great loss to the French troops. As, however, we had at that point only a few scouts well protected by earthworks, the projectiles did no damage, and meanwhile the bulk of our troops were traversing the small arm of the river, and forming on the left bank. The Austrian general was astounded when, marching towards the old battlefield on the morning of July 5, with the intention of taking us at a disadvantage the moment we landed, he perceived that his let wing had been turned by the left army, which was marching upon Sachsengang, and shortly occupied that place. Thus surprised, and his rear threatened, the archduke was obliged, in order to face us, to execute a retrograde movement on a vast scale towards the Russbach, always retreating before Napoleon, while our various corps were taking up their order of battle in the great plain which spread before them.

The Emperor sent three strong divisions of cavalry, with several battalions, supported by light artillery, to watch for the Archduke John at Siebenbrunn, these troops being regarded as outside the fighting line, and intended merely to prevent

a surprise. Of the main army, Davout's corps, resting on the Russbach, formed the right; the centre was composed of Bavarians, Wurtembergers, the corps of Oudinot and Bernadotte, and the Army of Italy. The left, under Masséna, moved along the small arm of the Danube, in the direction of Essling and Aspern. Each of these corps, as it advanced, was to carry the villages on its road. The reserve consisted of Marmont's corps, three divisions of cuirassiers, numerous artillery, and all the imperial guard. Finally, General Reynier, with one division and guns, remained to guard the island of Lobau, the old bridge which we had used at the time of the former battle having been replaced. A splendid day had succeeded the most horrible night. The French army in review order advanced majestically, preceded by an immense force of artillery, which crushed all opposition on the part of the enemy. The regiments composing the Austrian left, with General Nordmann in advance, were the first with whom he came in contact. Driven from Enzersdorf and Mühlleiten, they attempted to defend Raschdorf, but were pushed back, and General Nordmann was killed in the fight. This officer was from Alsace, formerly colonel of the Bercheny Hussars. He deserted to the enemy in 1793 with part of his regiment, at the same time as Dumouriez, and entered the Austrian service. Our march at first meeting no serious resistance, we occupied successively Essling, Aspern, Breitenlee, Raschdorf, and Süssenbrunn. So far Napoleon's plan had succeeded, the troops having crossed the Danube, and occupied the plain on the left bank. But nothing could be considered as decided until we had beaten and thoroughly broken up the enemy. He now made the serious mistake, instead of uniting his whole force on the Russbach, of dividing it, by retreating on two very divergent lines; one upon Markgraf and Neusiedel, behind the Russbach; the other upon the heights of Stamersdorf, where his right wing was obviously too far from the field of battle. The position on the bank of the Russbach is strong, commanding the plain, and covered by the brook, which, though not large, forms a very good obstacle, its banks being too steep for infantry to cross, except with difficulty, while the only way for cavalry and artillery is over the bridges in the villages which the Austrians held. As, however, the Russbach was the key of the position, Napoleon resolved to seize it. He therefore ordered Davout to attack Neusiedel; Oudinot and Bernadotte, Baumersdorf and Wagram respectively; while Prince Eugène, supported by Macdonald and Lamarque, crossed the stream between the two latter villages.

The light artillery of the guard crushed the Austrian masses with its fire, but Marshal Bernadotte, commanding the Saxons, attacked Wagram so feebly that he did not succeed. Macdonald and Lamarque, crossing the Russbach, placed the enemy's centre for a moment in danger; but the archduke, flinging himself upon that point with his reserves, forced our troops back again across the brook. This movement was at first executed in perfect order, but as night had approached, our infantry, who had just resisted a front attack of the Austrian light horse, seeing in their rear a brigade of French cavalry which General Salme was bringing up to their support, thought they were cut off, and some disorder ensued, aggravated by the blunder of some Saxon battalions firing on Lamarque's division. This confusion, however, was quickly repaired. Oudinot's attack on Baumersdorf, being made with a lack of cohesion, was also repulsed; Davout alone had any success; having forced the Russbach and turned Neusiedel, he was on the point of capturing that village, in spite of an obstinate defence, when night compelled him to suspend the attack, and shortly after the Emperor ordered him to retire, so as not to leave him exposed by being isolated on the further end of the stream.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

JULY 5, the chief events of which I have recorded, served only as preparation for the decisive battle of the morrow. The night passed quietly; our army, with its three cavalry divisions detached towards Leopoldsdorf, had its true right near Grosshofen; our centre was at Aderklaa; our left somewhat withheld at Breitenlee, giving our line the form of an angle, of which Wagram was the apex. The tents of the Emperor and his guard were a little in advance of Raschdorf. Cognisance of the plan of the battle of Wagram will show that the enemy's right, starting from the environs of Kampendorf and passing along the left bank of the Russbach to Helmhof, whence it reached by Sauring to Stamersdorf, formed thus a re-entering angle, of which the apex was equally at Wagram. This, therefore, was the essential point of which each side wished to get possession. To succeed in this, the object of either was to turn his enemy's left flank; but the archduke, having extended his army too much, was obliged to send his orders in writing, and these were either misunderstood or ill-executed; while the Emperor, having his reserves under his hand, could see and superintend the carry-out of his instructions.

At daybreak on the 6th the battle was renewed with more vigour than on the previous day. Much to Napoleon's surprise, the archduke, who had till then confined himself to the defensive, began to attack, and took Aderklaa from us. Soon the artillery fire extended over the whole line; never in the memory of man had the like been seen, for the number of pieces brought into action by the two armies amounted to 1,200. The Austrian left wing, under the archduke in person, crossed the Russbach, and debouched by those columns towards Leopoldsdorf, Glinzendorf, and Grosshofen, but was stoutly resisted, and even checked by Davout and Grouchy's cavalry by the time that Napoleon came up at the head of an enormous reserve. Seeing the extreme right of his line engaged, he had supposed for a moment that the Archduke John had joined the enemy's main army. So far was this, however, from being the case, that, as we afterwards learnt, he

was at that moment at Pressburg, eight leagues from the field of battle. Deprived of the support from him which they had hoped for, the Austrian left soon repented having attacked us. Overwhelmed by superior forces, more especially of artillery, it was driven back across the Russbach, with heavy loss, by Davout, who then sent a portion of his troops across, and marched by both banks on Neusiedel.

His right thus secured, the Emperor returned with his guard to the centre, and while Bernadotte attacked Wagram, and Oudinot marched on Baumersdorf, he ordered Masséna to retake Aderklaa. Taken and retaken this village finally remained in the hands of the Austrian grenadiers, whom the archduke led to a renewed attack, while at the same time he launched a strong column of cavalry against the Saxons, under Bernadotte, routing them completely, and flinging them on Masséna's troops, who were thrown into momentary disorder. The marshal was in his carriage, and the enemy, noticing it with its four white horses in the middle of the line, guessed that its occupant must be a person of importance, and poured a storm of shot upon it. The marshal and those about him were in great danger; we were surrounded with dead and dying. Captain Barain, an aide-de-camp, lost an arm, and Colonel Sainte-Croix was wounded.

The Emperor, galloping up, became aware that the archduke, in order to turn or even surround his left, was bringing forward his own right wing, which already occupied Süssenbrunn, Leopoldau, and Stadlau, and was marching on Aspern, thus threatening the column of Lobau. In order to be better seen by the troops, he got for a moment into the carriage, beside Masséna, and at sight of him order was restored. He bade Masséna change front to the rear, in order to bring his left to Aspern and front towards Hirschstetten, causing Macdonald, with three divisions, to take up the ground which Masséna left. These movements were carried out in good order, under an artillery fire from the enemy. Thus Napoleon, profiting by the concentration of his principal forces, brought up to support Macdonald, not only strong reserves of all arms, but finally the imperial guard, which took up its position in three lines in rear of the other troops.

At this moment the positions of the two armies were very curious, the opposed lines having almost the shape of two letters *Z* placed side by side. The Austrian left, posted at Neusiedel, was giving way before our right, while the two centres were holding their respective places, and our left wing

was retreating along the Danube before the enemy's right. The chances of either side thus seemed to be about equal. Really, however, they were all in favour of Napoleon—in the first place, because it was unlikely that the village of Neusiedel, where the only means of resistance was afforded by an old fortified tower, would hold out long against the attack which Davout was delivering with his usual vigour; and it was easy to see that when this was taken, the Austrian left, being outflanked and without support, would retreat indefinitely and get separated from the centre, while our left wing, though beaten at the moment, was in its retreat coming near to the island of Lobau, the powerful artillery on which would check the Austrians, and prevent them from following up their success. Secondly, Napoleon acting on inner lines, could hold a great part of his troops in reserve, and yet show a front in different directions; while the archduke, being obliged to extend his army, in order to execute his great movement on an outer line with the view of surrounding us, was not in force at any point. The Emperor, observing this mistake, was perfectly calm, though he could read in the faces of his staff the anxiety caused by the conquering march of the enemy's right, which, always driving Masséna's corps before it, had already reached the battlefield of May 22, and after crushing Boudet's division by a formidable charge of cavalry, was threatening our rear. But the success of the Austrians was short-lived. The hundred heavy guns with which Napoleon's foresight had armed the island of Lobau opened a scathing fire upon the enemy's right, and it was compelled, under pain of annihilation, to halt in its triumphant course, and retire in its turn. Masséna was then able to reform his divisions, which had lost heavily. We thought that Napoleon would profit by the disorder into which the cannonade had thrown the enemy's right wing to attack with his reserves; Marshal Masséna, indeed, sent me to ask for instructions on this point. But the Emperor remained impassible, his eyes ever fixed on the extreme right towards Neusiedel (which lies high and is surmounted by a tall tower, visible from all parts of the field), waiting to hurl himself upon the enemy's centre and right until Davout had beaten the left and flung it back behind that village. A valiant defence was being maintained by the Prince of Hesse-Homburg, who was there wounded; but at last we suddenly saw the smoke of Davout's guns beyond the tower. Beyond a doubt the enemy's left was beaten. Then, turning to me, the Emperor said: 'Quick! tell Masséna to

fall upon whatever is in front of him, and the battle is won.' At the same time the aides-de-camp from all the other corps were sent off to their chiefs with an order for a simultaneous attack. At this supreme moment Napoleon said to General Lauriston, 'Take a hundred guns, sixty from my guard, and crush the enemy's column.' As soon as their fire had shaken the Austrians, Marshal Bessières charged them with six regiments of heavy cavalry, supported by part of the cavalry of the guard. In vain did the archduke form squares: they were broken, with the loss of their guns and a great number of men. Our centre advanced in its turn, under Macdonald, and Süssenbrunn, Breitenlee, and Aderklaa were carried after a smart resistance. Meanwhile Masséna had recovered the ground lost on our left, and was pressing the enemy hard, forcing him beyond Stadlau and Kagran; and Davout, calling Oudinot to his support, occupied the heights beyond the Russbach, and captured Wagram. This decided the defeat of the Austrians: they retreated all along the line, retiring in very good order, along the road to Moravia.

The Emperor has been blamed for not pursuing the defeated army with his usual vigour; but the criticism is baseless. Napoleon was hindered by many weighty reasons from launching his troops too promptly on the enemy's track. In the first place, the road to Moravia would bring them into a rough country, divided by wooded hills, ravines and gorges, commanded by the mountains and forests of Bisamberg, which would offer excellent defensive positions, all the more difficult to carry that the archduke would occupy them with a large force, much of which had not been engaged, while his rear-guard was protected by powerful artillery. We might therefore expect a stubborn resistance, which, if prolonged, would lead to a night battle. Of these the chances are always uncertain, and the Emperor's victory might well be compromised.

In the second place, to ensure the assembling of the French army in the island of Lobau by the 4th, it had been necessary to put some of the corps in movement as early as the 1st. These, in order to reach the meeting place, had had to make forced marches, succeeded without any rest between by a battle extending over two days of very hot weather. Our troops were therefore worn out; while the Austrians, who had been for more than a month in camp, had had only the fatigues of the battle to endure. Thus, if we had attacked the archduke in the strong position which he had taken up, every advantage would have been on his side.

But a third and still more powerful argument checked Napoleon's ardour and decided him to allow his troops time to rest on the field of battle. He had just been warned by the generals of his light cavalry placed by him to look out beyond his extreme right that an enemy's force of 35,000 to 40,000, under the command of the Archduke John, had been seen debouching at Unter Siebenbrunn, that is to say, upon what, since our change of front, had become our actual rear. The reserve provided by the Emperor would doubtless have been enough to repulse the archduke; but one must admit that prudence would lead Napoleon not to engage his troops in the attack of the strong positions which the Archduke Charles appeared determined to defend obstinately, so long as he himself was open to an attack in rear from the Archduke John at the head of a strong and perfectly fresh force. The Emperor therefore ordered the pursuit to cease, and made his army bivouac in such a way that one part fronted to the side where the Archduke John was, and was ready to receive him if he ventured into the plain. Fearing, however, to come into contact with our victorious troops, he retreated hastily towards Hungary. If Napoleon had pursued with his usual vigour, the trophies from Wagram would probably have been more numerous, but on considering the motives which decided him to halt one cannot but praise his caution. If he had always acted with as much prudence he would have spared both France and himself great calamities.

In order to rest for a few hours after its victory, our army took up its position with its left at Floridsdorf, its centre in front of Gerhardsdorf, and its right beyond the Russbach. The Emperor's tents were pitched between Aderklaa and Raschdorf, and Masséna's head-quarters were at Leopoldau. The replacement of the old Spitz bridge put the army in direct communication with Vienna, which favoured the transport of the wounded to the hospitals, and of food and ammunition to the army.

The Austrians have, not without reason, blamed the Archduke John for the delays in his march and his carelessness in carrying out the Archduke Charles' orders. Indeed, on the evening of the 4th Charles wrote to his brother to leave Pressburg at once, and form a junction with the Austrian left at Siebenbrunn; but although John received the order by 4 A.M. on the 5th he did not march till eleven in the evening, and moved so slowly that although he had only eight leagues to do, he took twenty hours to reach Siebenbrunn, not coming up till seven o'clock on the 6th, by which time the battle was lost and

the Austrians were in full retreat. The Archduke Charles never forgave his brother for not carrying out his orders; John lost his command and was banished to Styria.[1]

In the absence of pursuit, the Austrian losses were much less considerable than they might have been. Still, they admitted 24,000 killed and wounded, among the former three of their generals. One of them, Wukassowitz, had distinguished himself against Bonaparte in Italy; the other two, Nordmann and D'Aspre, were Frenchmen in arms against their country. According to the bulletins we made 20,000 prisoners and captured 30 guns; but I believe this estimate was much exaggerated. We only took a few colours. Our loss was nearly equal to that of the enemy; Generals Lacour, Gauthier, and Lasalle, and seven colonels were killed. The enemy had ten generals, including the archduke, wounded; the number of ours was twenty-one, among them, Marshal Bessières. Among the twelve colonels wounded three were special favourites with the Emperor—Dumesnil, Corbineau, and Sainte-Croix: the two first, who belonged to the mounted chasseurs of the guard, lost a leg apiece; the Emperor rewarded them richly. As for Sainte-Croix, who had his skin grazed by a cannon-ball, his wound was not dangerous, at which his friends rejoiced. However, if he had lost a leg he might perhaps have been living now, as well as his brother Robert, one of whose legs remains on the battlefield of Moskwa. Although Sainte-Croix had been only two months colonel, and was not yet twenty-seven, the Emperor made him major-general, Count with 25,000 francs pension, Grand Cross of the Order of Hesse, and Commander of that of Baden. On the evening of the battle the Emperor rewarded the services of Macdonald, Oudinot, and Marmont by giving each of them his marshal's bâton. It was not, however, in his power to give them the talents required to command an army; brave and good divisional generals as they were when in the Emperor's hands they showed themselves clumsy when they were away from him, either in devising a plan of campaign, or in executing it, or modifying it according to circumstances. It was held in the army that the Emperor, not being able to replace Lannes, wanted to get the small change for him: but we must remember that these three marshals played an unlucky part in the campaigns which ended in the fall of Napoleon and the ruin of the country.

[1] [Forty years later he reappeared on the scene. In 1848 the German revolutionists named him Vicar-General of the Germanic Empire. In the meantime he took an active part in the early exploration of the Austrian Alps.]

CHAPTER XLIX.

General Lasalle, who fell at Wagram, was keenly regretted both by the Emperor and the army. He was the best light cavalry officer for outpost duty, and had the surest eye. He could take in a whole district in a moment, and seldom made a mistake, so that his reports on the enemy's position were clear and precise. He was a handsome man, and of a bright wit, but, although well educated, he had adopted the fashion of posing as a swashbuckler. He might always be seen drinking, swearing, singing, smashing everything, and possessed by a passion for play. He was an excellent horseman, and brave to the point of rashness. Although he had fought in the first revolutionary wars, he was little known before the famous campaign of 1796, when, as a captain in the 2nd Hussars, he attracted the notice of General Bonaparte at the battle of Rivoli. This took place, as is well known, on a lofty plateau bounded on one side by steep rocks, at the foot of which flows the Adige, along the road to Rivoli. The Austrians, having been beaten by the French infantry, were leaving the battlefield by every available way. One of their columns hoped to escape by reaching the valley over the rocks ; but Lasalle followed them down this difficult passage with two squadrons. In vain it was represented to him that cavalry cannot be employed on such dangerous ground. He galloped down the descent, followed by his hussars; the astonished enemy retreated headlong. Lasalle overtook them, and made some thousand prisoners under the eyes of General Bonaparte and the army. From this day onwards Lasalle was in high favour with Bonaparte, who promoted him rapidly and took him to Egypt, where he made him colonel. In one of the numerous engagements with the Mamelukes the thong which held Lasalle's sabre to his wrist broke ; he dismounted in the thickest of the mêlée, and, undisturbed by danger, picked up his weapon, nimbly remounted, and dashed at the enemy afresh. One must have seen a cavalry combat to appreciate the courage, coolness, and dexterity which such a deed requires, especially in presence of horsemen like the Mamelukes.

Lasalle had intimate relations with a French lady in high society, and while he was in Egypt their correspondence was seized by the English and insultingly published by order of the Government—an act which even in England was blamed. A divorce followed, and on his return to Europe Lasalle married the lady. As general, Lasalle was placed by the Emperor in command of the advanced guard of the Grand Army. He distinguished himself at Austerlitz and in Prussia; having the audacity to appear before Stettin and summon the place with two regiments of hussars. The governor lost his head and brought out the keys, instead of using them to lock the gates, in which case all the cavalry in Europe could not have taken it. This feat brought Lasalle much credit, and raised the Emperor's liking for him to a high point. Indeed, he petted him to an incredible degree, laughing at all his freaks, and never letting him pay his own debts. Just as he was on the point of marrying the lady to whom I have referred, Napoleon had given him 200,000 francs out of his privy purse. A week later, meeting him at the Tuileries, the Emperor asked, 'When is the wedding?' 'As soon as I have got some money to furnish with, sir.' 'Why, I gave you 200,000 francs last week! What have you done with them?' 'Paid my debts with half, and lost the other half at cards.' Such an admission would have ruined any other general. The Emperor laughed, and merely giving a sharp tug to Lasalle's moustache, ordered Duroc to give him another 200,000.

At the close of the battle of Wagram, Lasalle's division had not been engaged. He came and begged Masséna to let him pursue, and the marshal assented, on condition that he would act with prudence. Hardly had Lasalle started, when he saw a brigade of enemy's infantry, which was hastening, closely pressed, to reach the village of Leopoldau, in order to obtain a regular capitulation and escape the fury of the victors in the open. Lasalle guessed what the Austrian general was after, and, pointing to the setting sun, addressed his men, 'The battle is ending, and we alone have not contributed to the victory. Come on!' He dashed forward, sword in hand, followed by his squadrons, and, in order to prevent the enemy from entering the village, made for the narrow space now left between the head of the column and Leopoldau. The others, seeing themselves cut off from the hoped-for shelter, halted and opened a brisk file-fire. A bullet struck Lasalle in the head, killing him on the spot. His division lost a hundred troopers, besides many wounded. The Austrians opened their way to

the village, and when our infantry divisions came up, capitulated, the officers declaring that that had been their intention in making for Leopoldau. Thus Lasalle's charge was useless, and he paid dear for a mention in a bulletin.

His death left a great gap in our light cavalry, which he had trained to a high degree of perfection. In other respects, however, he had done it much harm. The eccentricities of a popular and successful leader are always imitated, and his example was long mischievous to the light cavalry. A man did not think himself a chasseur, still less a hussar, if he did not model himself on Lasalle, and become, like him, a reckless, drinking, swearing rowdy. Many officers copied the fault of this famous outpost leader, but none of them attained to the merits which in him atoned for the faults.

When a battle is fought in summer, it often happens that the ripe corn is set on fire by shells and gun-wadding; but in no battle of the Empire did this occur on such a scale as at Wagram. The season was early, and the weather hot; the battlefield was completely covered with crops ready for harvest, which caught quickly and carried the fire with terrific rapidity. The movements of both armies were hampered by the necessity of avoiding it; for if once troops were overtaken by it, pouches and wagons exploded, carrying destruction through the ranks. Whole regiments might be seen hastening out of the way of the fire, and taking up their position where the corn had been burnt already; but this means of escape was only open to the able-bodied. Of the soldiers who were severely wounded great numbers perished in the flames; and of those whom the fire did not reach, many lay for days hidden by the tall corn, living during that time on the ears. The Emperor had the plain searched by bands of cavalry, and vehicles were brought from Vienna to remove the wounded, friends and foes alike. But few of those even whom the fire had passed recovered, and the soldiers had a saying that straw-fire had killed nearly as many as gun-fire.

The two days of the battle were an anxious time for the Viennese, who, from their roofs and towers, could enjoy a full view of all that took place, and who swayed from hope to fear with the progress of the fight. The famous and witty field-marshal Prince de Ligne, now well advanced in years,[1] had assembled the best society in Vienna in his country house, on

[1] [Born 1735. He survived five years longer, dying during the Congress of Vienna.]

the highest of the neighbouring hills, whence the eye could take in the whole field of battle. With his experience of war and his keen intelligence, he quickly seized Napoleon's design and the archduke's blunders, and foretold the defeat of the latter. When the Viennese saw the right of their army, on the 6th, rolling back our left, they broke into a frenzy of joy, and through our glasses we could see thousands of men and women waving hats and handkerchiefs to kindle still further the courage of their troops, who were winning at that point, but there only. The Prince de Ligne did not share the joy of the Viennese, and I have it from one who was close by the old soldier that he said to his guests, 'Do not rejoice just yet; in less than a quarter of an hour the archduke will be beaten. He has no reserves, and you see the plain is crowded with the masses of Napoleon's!' His prediction was justified. As, however, one must do justice even to an enemy, I may say, after criticising the archduke's tactics, that his blunders are vastly excused by the hope, which he was justified in having. of the arrival of his brother with 35,000 or 40,000 men to fall on our right or rear. Moreover, it must be allowed that, having formed his plan, he carried it out with much vigour, showing great personal courage, with a remarkable gift of keeping up the spirit of his troops. Of this I will cite a striking instance.

As is well known, every regiment has, besides its colonel commanding, a proprietary colonel, whose name it bears; usually some prince or general. At his death the regiment passes to another, so that a corps may often have to abandon a name illustrated on a score of fields, and take some new and unknown designation. In this way Latour's dragoons, so famous throughout Europe in the days of the early Revolution wars, when General Latour died took the name of General Vincent, whereby a fine tradition was destroyed, the self-esteem of the regiment injured, and their zeal materially weakened. Now it happened on the first day of Wagram that the archduke, seeing that his centre was on the point of being broken by Oudinot's corps, decided to attack this with cavalry, and ordered Vincent's dragoons, who were at hand, to charge. They did so, but without vigour; they were beaten off, and the French advance continued. Again the archduke sent the regiment at them, and again it recoiled before our battalions. The Austrian line was pierced. In this emergency the archduke, hastening to meet the regiment, stopped it in its flight, and, to shame it for its lack of vigour, said in a loud voice, 'Vincent's Dragoons, it is easy to see that you are no longer Latour's Dragoons!'

Humiliated by this cutting but deserved reproach, they replied, 'Yes, yes, we are!' 'Well, then,' cried the archduke, drawing his sword, 'show yourselves worthy of your old fame, and follow me!' A bullet struck him, but he flew upon the French. Vincent's regiment followed him with ardour; their charge was terrible, and Oudinot's grenadiers fell back with heavy loss. This is how an able and energetic general contrives to turn everything to account which can restore the shaken courage of his men. The archduke's address kindled the dragoons to such a degree that after stopping Oudinot's grenadiers, they charged Lamarque's division, and recaptured 2,000 prisoners and five stand of colours which it had just taken. In complimenting the dragoons the archduke said, 'Now you can be proud to bear the name of Vincent, which you have just made no less illustrious than that of Latour.' This regiment was one of those which on the following day contributed most to the rout of Boudet's division of infantry.

Among the multitude of episodes to which the battle of Wagram gave rise, the most important, and one which produced very strong feeling in the army, has not been related by any author. I mean the disgrace of General Bernadotte, who was ordered off the field by the Emperor. Between these two eminent persons no love was ever lost; and since the conspiracy of Rennes, got up by Bernadotte against the Consular Government,[1] they had been on very bad terms. This notwithstanding, Napoleon had included Bernadotte in the first creation of marshals, and made him Prince of Ponte Corvo at the request of Joseph Bonaparte, whose sister-in-law Bernadotte had married. Nothing, however, could appease Bernadotte's hatred and envy of Napoleon. He flattered him to his face, and afterwards, as the Emperor well knew, criticised and found fault. The ability and courage which he had shown at Austerlitz would have induced the Emperor to overlook his misdeeds had he not aggravated them by his conduct at Jena. In spite of the urgent requests of his generals, he let his three divisions remain wholly inactive, refusing to support Davout, who a league away, at Auerstädt, was withstanding half the Prussian army under the King in person, and ultimately beat them. The army and all France were indignant with Bernadotte; but the Emperor did no more than reprimand him severely. Stimulated by this, the marshal did well at Hall and Lubeck, but soon fell back into his customary laziness, ill-will possibly, and, in spite

[1] [See chap. xv.]

of orders, was two days late for the battle of Eylau. This lukewarm conduct roused afresh the Emperor's dissatisfaction, which grew more and more during the campaign in Austria. Bernadotte, in command of a corps of Saxons, always came up late, acted without energy, and criticised not only the Emperor's tactics, but the way in which the other marshals handled their troops. The Emperor, however, restrained his irritation until on the first day of the battle of Wagram Bernadotte's lack of vigour and false tactics allowed the Austrians to retake the important position of Deutsch-Wagram. It seems that after this repulse Bernadotte said to some officers that the crossing of the Danube and subsequent action had been mismanaged, and that if he had been in command he could by a scientific manœuvre have compelled the archduke to surrender almost without a blow. This remark was reported the same evening to the Emperor, who was naturally angry. Such were the terms on which Napoleon and Bernadotte stood when the undecided action was resumed on the 6th.

We have seen that, when the battle was at its height, the Saxons, badly handled by Bernadotte, were repulsed and charged by the enemy's cavalry, being flung in disorder upon Masséna's corps, which they nearly carried with them. The Saxons are brave, but the best of troops are sometimes routed; and in such cases it is of no use for the officers to try to rally the men who are within reach of the enemy's sabres and bayonets. Generals and colonels should get as quickly as possible to the head of the flying mass, then face about, and by their presence and their words arrest the movement of retreat, and re-form the battalions. In conformity with this rule, Bernadotte, whose personal bravery was unquestioned, galloped off into the plain at the head of his staff, to get in front of the fugitives and stop them. Hardly was he clear of the throng, when he found himself face to face with the Emperor, who observed ironically, 'Is that the scientific manœuvre by which you were going to make the archduke lay down his arms?' Bernadotte's vexation at the rout of his army was heightened by learning that the Emperor knew of his inconsiderate remark of the previous day, and he remained speechless. Presently recovering himself, he tried to mutter some words of explanation; but the Emperor in a severe and haughty tone, said: 'I remove you, sir, from the command of the army corps, which you handle so badly. Withdraw at once, and leave the Grand Army within twenty-four hours; a bungler like you is no good to me.' Therewith he turned his back on the marshal, and,

taking command for the moment of the Saxons, restored order in their ranks, and led them again to meet the enemy.

Under any circumstances, Bernadotte would have been in despair at such an outburst; but as he had been ordered to leave the field at the moment when he was galloping ahead of the fugitives, which might give an opening for slanderous tongues to reflect on his courage, though the object of his retreat was to check that of his soldiers, he understood how much worse it made his position, and it is asserted that in his despair he wished to throw himself on the enemy's bayonets. His aides-de-camp, however, held him back, and took him away from the Saxon troops. All day long he strayed about the battlefield, and stayed towards evening behind our left wing at the village of Leopoldau, where his officers persuaded him to pass the night in the pretty little château belonging to that place. Hardly, however, was he established, when Masséna, who had ordered his head-quarters to be fixed at Leopoldau, came to take possession of the same house. As it is customary for generals to be quartered in the midst of their troops, and not to lodge in villages where their colleagues' regiments are, Bernadotte wished to give way to Masséna; the latter, however, not yet knowing of his colleague's mishap, begged him to stay and share the quarters with him, to which Bernadotte agreed. While arrangements were being made for their lodging, an officer who had witnessed the scene between the Emperor and Bernadotte came and told Masséna of it, whereupon he changed his mind, and discovered that the house was not roomy enough for two marshals and their staffs. Wishing, however, to keep up an appearance of generosity, he said to his aides-de-camp, 'This lodging was mine by rights, but as poor Bernadotte is in trouble I must give it up to him; find me another place—a barn, or anywhere.' Then he got into his carriage and went off without a word to Bernadotte, who felt this desertion deeply. In his exasperation he committed another and very serious mistake; for though no longer in command of the Saxon troops, he addressed them in a general order, in which he made the most of their exploits, and consequently of his own, without waiting for the usual assignment of credit on the part of the commander-in-chief. This infringement of regulations increased the Emperor's anger, and Bernadotte was obliged to withdraw from the army and return to France.

Among the remarkable incidents of the battle of Wagram, I may mention the combat between two cavalry regiments, which, though serving in hostile armies, belonged to the same

proprietary colonel, Prince Albert of Sachs-Teschen. He had married the celebrated Archduchess Christina of Austria, governor of the Low Countries, and, having the title of prince in both states, he possessed a regiment of hussars in Saxony and of cuirassiers in Austria. Both one and the other bore his name, and, as was the custom of both states, he appointed all the officers in each. Austria and Saxony having been at peace for many years, whenever he had an officer to place he would put him indifferently in whichever regiment had a vacancy, so that out of one family there could be found some members in the Saxon hussars, and others in the Austrian cuirassiers. Now, by an accident at once deplorable and extraordinary, these two regiments met on the battlefield of Wagram, and, impelled by duty and by the point of honour, they charged each other. Strange to say, the cuirassiers were broken by the hussars, who, in their desire to retrieve under the eyes of Napoleon the repulse of the Saxon infantry, fought with the greatest vigour. Indeed the Saxon infantry, though it has often shown its courage, is far from being either as solidly organised or as well trained as the cavalry, which is rightly held to be one of the best in Europe.

CHAPTER L.

You will probably now like to hear my own adventures in this terrible battle. Though frequently much exposed, especially on the second day, when the enemy's artillery converged its fire on Marshal Masséna's carriage, and we were literally under a hail of cannon-balls, which struck down a good many around me, I was lucky enough not to be wounded. I was also in considerable danger when the Austrian cavalry had broken and routed Boudet's division, and the marshal sent me to that general in the middle of 10,000 flying soldiers, who were being hewn down by the cavalry. Again I was more than once in danger when, in carrying orders, I had to pass near some of the many spots where the corn was blazing. By frequent détours I managed to escape the flames, but it was impossible to avoid crossing the fields where the ashes of the burnt straw were still hot enough to scorch the horses' feet. Two of mine were rendered useless for some time by the injuries they thus received, and a third was in such pain that he was within an ace of rolling me over in the half-extinguished straw. However, I got through without any serious accident; but though I escaped personal damage, a disagreeable thing befell me, which had very injurious results. On the second day of the battle I got into almost hopeless trouble with Masséna. The way of it was this. The marshal sent me with a message to the Emperor; I had the very greatest difficulty in reaching him, and was coming back after having galloped more than three leagues over the yet burning ashes of the corn. My horse, dead beat, and with his legs half-burnt, could go no further when I got back to Masséna, and found him in a great difficulty. His corps was retreating before the enemy's right along the Danube, and the infantry of Boudet's division, broken by the Austrian cavalry, which was sabring them mercilessly, were flying pell-mell across the plain. It was the most critical moment of the battle. From his carriage the marshal could see the imminent danger, and was calmly making his dispositions to maintain order in the three infantry divisions which as yet were unbroken. For this purpose he

had been obliged to send so many aides-de-camp to his generals that he had none with him except his son, Prosper Masséna, a young lieutenant. At that moment he saw that the fugitives from Boudet's division were making for the three divisions which were still fighting, and were on the point of flinging themselves upon their ranks, and drawing them along in a general rout. To stop this catastrophe the marshal wished to tell the generals and officers to direct the torrent of fliers towards the island of Lobau, where the disordered troops would find a secure shelter behind the powerful artillery. It was a dangerous mission, as there was every probability that the aide-de-camp who went into that disorderly rabble would be attacked by some of the enemy's troopers. The marshal could not make up his mind to expose his son to this danger, but he had no other officer near him, and it was clear that the order must be carried.

I came up just at the right moment to extricate Masséna from this cruel dilemma, so, without giving me time to take breath, he ordered me to throw myself into the danger which he dreaded for his son; but observing that my horse could hardly stand, he lent me one of his, which an orderly was leading. I was too well acquainted with military duty not to be aware that a general cannot bind himself to follow the arrangements which his aides-de-camp have made amongst themselves for taking their turn of duty, however great the peril may be; the chief must be free in a given case to employ whichever officer he thinks best suited to get his orders executed. Thus, although Prosper had not carried a single order all day, and it was his turn to go, I made no remark. I will even say that my self-esteem hindered me from divining the marshal's real motive in sending me on a duty both difficult and dangerous when it ought to have fallen to another, and I was proud of his confidence in me. But Masséna soon destroyed my illusion by saying, in a wheedling tone, 'You understand, my friend, why I do not send my son, although it's his turn; I am afraid of getting him killed. You understand? you understand?' I should have held my tongue, but, disgusted with such ill-disguised selfishness, I could not refrain from answering, and that in the presence of several generals: 'Marshal, I was going under the impression that I was about to fulfil a duty; I am sorry that you have corrected my mistake, for now I understand perfectly that, being obliged to send one of your aides-de-camp to almost certain death, you would rather it should be I than your son, but I think you might have spared

me this cruel plain speaking.' And without waiting a reply I went off at full gallop towards Boudet's division, which the enemy's troopers were pitilessly slaughtering. As I left the carriage I heard a discussion begin between the marshal and his son, but the uproar of the battle and the speed at which I was going prevented me from catching their words. Their sense, however, was shortly explained, for hardly had I reached Boudet's division and begun doing my utmost to direct the terrified crowd towards the island of Lobau, when I beheld Prosper Masséna at my side. The brave lad, indignant at the way in which his father had sent me into danger and wished to reduce him to inactivity, had escaped unawares to follow me. 'I wish,' said he, 'at least to share the danger from which I ought to have saved you if my father's blind affection had not made him unjust to you when it was my turn to go.' The young man's noble straightforwardness pleased me; in his place I should have wished to do the same. Still, I had rather he had been further off at this critical moment, for no one who has not seen it can form an idea of a mass of infantry which has been broken and is being actively pursued by cavalry. Sabres and lances were working terrible execution among this rabble of terrified men, who were flying in disorder instead of taking the equally easy and much safer course of forming themselves into groups and defending themselves with the bayonet. Prosper Masséna was very brave, and in no way dazed by the danger, although we found ourselves every moment in this chaos face to face with the enemy's troopers. My position then became very critical, since I had a threefold task to fulfil. First, to parry the blows aimed at young Masséna, who had never learnt the sword exercise and used his weapon clumsily; secondly, to defend myself, and lastly, to speak to our demoralised soldiers to make them understand that they were to go towards the island of Lobau and not towards the divisions which were still in line. Neither of us received any wound, for when the Austrian troopers perceived that we were determined to defend ourselves vigorously, they left us, and turned their attention to the unresisting foot-soldiers.

When troops are in disorder, the soldiers fling themselves like sheep in the direction where they see their comrades running, and thus, as soon as I had imparted the marshal's orders to a certain number of officers, and they had shouted to their people to run towards the island, the stream of fugitives made in that direction. I found General Boudet at last, and he succeeded under the fire of our guns in rallying his troops. My task was

thus at an end, and I returned with Prosper towards the marshal. But in my desire to take the shortest road, I imprudently passed near a clump of trees, behind which some hundred Austrian uhlans were posted. They charged upon us unawares, we meanwhile making at full speed for a line of French cavalry which was coming our way. We were none too soon, for the enemy's squadron was on the point of reaching us, and was pressing us so close that I thought for a moment that we were going to be killed or taken prisoners. But at the approach of our men the uhlans wheeled about, all but one officer, who, being admirably mounted, would not leave us without having a shot at us. One bullet pierced the neck of Prosper's horse, and the animal, throwing up his head violently, covered young Masséna's face with blood. I thought he was wounded, and was getting ready to defend him against the uhlan officer, when we were met by the advanced files of the French regiment. These, firing their carbines at the Austrian officer, laid him dead on the spot, just as he was turning to gallop off.

Prosper and I then returned to the marshal, who uttered a cry of grief on seeing his son covered with blood. But on finding that he was not wounded he gave free vent to his anger, and in the presence of several generals, his own aides-de-camp, and two orderly officers of the Emperor's, he scolded his son roundly, and ended his lecture with the words, 'Who ordered you to go and stick your head into that row, you young idiot?' Prosper's answer was really sublime. 'Who ordered me? My honour! This is my first campaign. I am already lieutenant and member of the Legion of Honour; I have received several foreign decorations, and so far I have done nothing for them. I wished to show my comrades, the army, and France that if I am not destined to have the military talent of my illustrious father, I am at least worthy by my courage to bear the name of Masséna.' Seeing that his son's noble statements met with the approbation of all the bystanders, the marshal made no answer; but his anger fell chiefly on me, whom he accused of having carried his son away, when on the contrary his presence was a great hindrance to me. The two orderly officers having reported at head-quarters the scene between the marshal and his son, Napoleon heard of it, and happening to come that evening to Leopoldau, sent for Prosper, and said to him, taking him in a friendly way by the ear: 'Good, very good, my dear boy; that is how young people like you ought to start on their career.' Then turning to the marshal, he said in a low tone, but loud enough to be heard by General Bertrand, from whom I have

the story, ' I love my brother Louis no less than you your son ; but when he was my aide-de-camp in Italy he did his turn of duty like the others, and I should have been afraid of bringing him into discredit if I had sent one of his comrades into danger instead of him.' This reproof from the Emperor, in addition to the answer which I had been foolish enough to make to Masséna, naturally set him still more against me. From that day forward he never addressed me with *tu*, and although outwardly he treated me well, I knew that the grudge would remain, and as you will see I was not mistaken.

Never again did the Austrians fight with so much vigour as at Wagram ; their retreat was admirable for its coolness and good order. They had, no doubt, the advantage, for the reasons I have stated, of leaving the field without being pursued ; but I am not able to explain the reason for Napoleon's delay in following them up on the ensuing morning. It has been said that as the roads both to Bohemia and to Moravia were in front of him, the Emperor was awaiting the result of reconnoissances in order to know what force the archduke had on each of these roads. Reconnoissances, however, can only give very incomplete information, since the enemy's rear-guard very soon brings them to a halt, and they can see nothing beyond. Precious time was therefore lost uselessly ; we had seen the enemy's columns marching off on both the roads, and should have pursued them at day-break on the 7th by one or the other. However that may be, the Emperor did not commence the pursuit till 2 P.M., and went himself no more than three leagues, staying the night at the château of Volkersdorf, from which the Emperor of Austria had on the two previous days watched the battle. General Vandamme was left in command at Vienna, General Reynier in the island of Lobau, Oudinot at Wagram, and Macdonald at Floridsdorf. His rear thus secured, Napoleon sent Marmont and Davout in pursuit on the road to Moravia, and Masséna on that to Bohemia. The Army of Italy and the guard marched between the two high roads, ready to give support where it was wanted.

The stronger portion of the Austrian army was on the road to Bohemia. The archduke had made good use of the night of the 6th, and so much of the 7th as Napoleon had allowed him, and his baggage wagons and artillery were well out of our reach. On leaving the field of battle we fell in with the scouts of the enemy's rear-guard in the defile of Langen-Enzersdorf, a long and narrow passage which would have been fatal to the archduke if, on the previous day, we had been able to push him

back to it. Passing this we entered a wide plain, in the middle of which stands Korn-Neuburg, a small walled town. Here the rear-guard, composed of nine battalions of Croats and Tyrolese Jägers, with a strong body of cavalry and plenty of guns, awaited us in impressive tranquillity. No doubt it is right in war to be enterprising, especially in presence of an already beaten foe; but this rule must not be followed beyond the limits of prudence. French cavalry generals are often too venturesome. Here they repeated the fault which Montbrun had committed before Raab in the previous June, when he would not wait for the infantry, and, leading his squadrons too near the fortress, suffered heavily from its artillery. In spite of that severe lesson, General Bruyère, who had succeeded Lasalle in the command of the light cavalry of Masséna's corps, having the lead when we emerged from the defile, would not wait for the infantry to pass him and form in the plain. Deploying his squadrons, he advanced towards the enemy, who, remaining quite still, let him come within cannon-range, then opened a heavy fire, under which he lost heavily. At sight of this Masséna got very angry, and sent me to Bruyère to express his dissatisfaction. I found the general at the head of his division, under a storm of balls, brave enough, but much vexed at having run into this risk, and much perplexed as to his best course. If he charged the Austrian cavalry, of twice his own numbers, he would have his division cut up. On the other hand, if he retreated to get out of range, and await the infantry, it was certain that the enemy's cavalry would be on him as soon as he had faced about, and would drive him back on our battalions, as they issued from the defile. The only other thing was to stay where he was, and wait for the infantry; and this seemed the least of evils, as I permitted myself to tell General Bruyère, when he did me the honour to ask my advice. When I repeated it to the marshal, he approved, but was still in a high rage with the general, exclaiming every moment: 'Can you conceive anyone getting his people killed like that for no good?' Meanwhile he hurried up Legrand's division, and, as soon as it was formed, sent the 26th to attack Korn-Neuburg. The place was taken, and the enemy's cavalry driven back by Bruyère's squadrons, who much preferred the danger of a charge to being pounded, as they had been for half-an-hour, by the artillery. The general behaved like a hero in the hand-to-hand fighting, which did not save him from being sharply reprimanded by the marshal.

On the 8th Masséna continued the pursuit, but we only had a slight engagement. We occupied the town of Stockerau,

taking large stores of provisions, especially wine, which delighted the soldiers. Continuing on the 9th, the army was stopped by a strong force, before Hollabrunn. A brisk fight ensued, in which General Bruyère, remembering his mistake, handled his division more prudently, but exposed himself freely, and got severely wounded. The unlucky town of Hollabrunn, hardly rebuilt after the fire in 1805,[1] was again reduced to ashes, and again many wounded men were buried in the ruins. The enemy withdrew with loss.

During the night of the 9th the marshal sent me to the Emperor with a report of the action. After a long march, and frequently losing my way in country roads, I reached Napoleon, still at the château of Volkersdorf. His Majesty had just learned that a great part of the Austrian army, leaving the road to Moravia, was marching towards Laa, to cross the Taya, and rejoin the archduke at Znaym, and had sent Marmont in haste to follow them. He took the same direction himself on the 10th, while Davout pushed on to Nikolsburg, and took it. I was sent back to Masséna with orders to march quickly on Znaym, where the enemy appeared to be concentrating, with the view of again giving battle. All through the 10th the enemy's rear-guard retreated steadily before Masséna's corps. After its losses at Hollabrunn, some disorder began to show itself, and we made a great many prisoners. The same day, Prince Liechtenstein appeared at our outposts with a flag of truce, to ask for an armistice on the part of the Austrian commander-in-chief. Masséna sent him on to Napoleon with one of his officers, but by the time they reached Volkersdorf the Emperor had set out for Laa, and the flag of truce only reached him the next evening at Znaym, a delay which cost a good many lives. The Austrian rear-guard, after retreating all day without fighting, in the evening disputed our entrance into the village of Guntersdorf. There was a brisk artillery engagement, in the course of which a ball struck Masséna's carriage, and another killed one of the horses. Luckily, the marshal had got out five minutes before. We repulsed the enemy at length, and passed the night at Guntersdorf.

In war, spies are indispensable. Masséna used to employ in this capacity two Jews, brothers, very intelligent men, who, in order to get accurate information, and earn higher pay, used to slip in among the Austrian columns, under guise of selling fruit and wine; then, falling to the rear, they would wait till the

[1] [See p. 153.]

French came up, and report to the marshal. While he was at Hollabrunn, he had promised a large sum to one of these Jews if he would get him, by the next evening, an approximate 'state' of the forces in front of us. Tempted by this bait, the Israelite travelled all night by country roads, reached the head of the Austrian army, and climbed a leafy tree in a wood, where he was able to command a view of the road without being seen. As the columns filed past, the Jew entered in a note-book the strength of each arm. While he was thus occupied, a sergeant of Jägers entered the wood for a few moments' rest, and lay down just at the foot of the tree in which the Jew was perched. In his alarm the spy probably made some movement in order to hide himself; the note-book fell from his hand, and dropped by the sergeant's side. Looking up, he saw a man amongst the topmost branches, and took aim at him, ordering him to come down. The miserable Jew was forced to obey, and was taken before an Austrian general, who, on seeing the accusing note-book, had him bayonetted. He lay on the road till the French army came up, some hours later. As soon as the second Jew, who was with us at that moment, beheld his brother's corpse, he broke out into fearful shrieks; then, collecting himself, he rummaged the dead man's pockets. Finding nothing there, however, he cursed the enemy for, as he said, stealing from him the money which his brother had with him; and, finally, so that he might at least inherit something from him, he took all his clothes, in order to sell them later on. There you have a good picture of the Jewish character!

CHAPTER LI.

On July 11, an ill-omened day for me, Masséna's corps appeared before Znaym about 10 A.M., and half a league to our right we could see Marmont's divisions on the plateau of Teswitz, which they had reached by the road from Laa to Brunn. By mid-day the Emperor and his guard were at Zuckerhandel, and the Army of Italy not far away. The town of Znaym is surrounded by a solid wall, and stands on a vine-clad hill, at the foot of which runs the river Taya and a large brook named Lischen, which joins the Taya below Teswitz. Thus the hill of Znaym forms a position entrenched by nature, for the banks at most points bristle with steep rocks difficult of access. The ground falls towards the village of Oblass, through which runs the Vienna road, by which we arrived.

Having had no answer to his proposal of an armistice, the archduke resolved to profit by the good position which he occupied, and risk the chance of another battle. Accordingly he formed his army in two lines, the first having its right on the Taya near Klosterbruck, its centre opposite Teswitz, and its left reaching to Kukrowitz. The second line occupied Znaym, the Galgenberg, and Brenditz, with the reserves in rear; while a swarm of skirmishers defended the vineyards between Znaym and the two streams.

On arriving before Oblass Masséna occupied that village and the double bridge which crosses the river at the so-called 'Pheasants' Island.' Legrand's division, after capturing it, went on towards Alt-Schallersdorf and Klosterbruck, a large convent turned into a tobacco factory. Here our troops met with a brisk resistance, and as our artillery were unable to pass through the vines, and had consequently to fire uphill from the bank of the river, it was unable to afford them any support. The marshal regretted that his inability to mount his horse prevented him from going to see for himself what could be done to remedy this state of things; whereupon I ventured to say that having explored the ground before the attack, I thought that a battery going from Oblass along the right bank of the river, and

taking up its position above the village of Edelspitz, might do good service. Masséna, thanking me for the suggestion, ordered me to guide six guns to the spot named; and these, taking in rear the troops defending Klosterbruck and Alt-Schallersdorf, did so much execution among them that they quickly abandoned those two positions to our troops. As the marshal was congratulating himself on the effect produced by this battery, I went up and suggested taking another to the Kuhberg, the highest ground on the left bank, which could be reached by strengthening the teams. He agreed; and after some trouble I got eight guns on to the Kuhberg, whence they could play full on the Austrians massed in front of Znaym; so that I have no doubt but that, if the battle had continued, our battery on the Kuhberg would have been of great use by forcing the enemy to retire within the place. It is the best point from which to reduce the fortress of Znaym with artillery.

While this brisk cannonade was going on, a fearful storm burst over the district. In a moment everything was under water; the Taya overflowed; not a gun or musket could be fired. General Legrand's troops took shelter in Klosterbruck and Schallersdorf, and most of all in the cellars hollowed out among the vineyards. But while our soldiers, unheeding the enemy, whom they supposed to be under shelter in Znaym, were emptying the casks, the archduke, informed doubtless of this carelessness, and wishing to cut off the retreat of Legrand's division, sent a column of a thousand men from the town. Marching at the double down the high road, they went through Alt-Schallersdorf, and reached the first bridge at Oblass just as I was coming down the Kuhberg. I had gone up by way of Neu-Schallersdorf, having brought my guns from Oblass; but when I went back alone it seemed useless to go so far round, as I knew that all the ground between Znaym and the Taya was occupied by our infantry. So, as soon as I reached the little bridge between Edelspitz and Pheasants' Island, I crossed the Taya to reach the large bridges on the high road opposite Oblass, where I had left the marshal. Just as I had got on to the causeway connecting these two bridges, I heard behind me, in spite of the storm, the sound of many feet marching in time. Turning my head I beheld a column of Austrian grenadiers not twenty-five paces away. My first impulse was to go off at full speed to warn the marshal and his troops; but to my great surprise I found the bridge nearest to Oblass occupied by a brigade of French cuirassiers. General Guiton, who commanded it, knowing that Legrand was on the other side of

the river, and having received an indistinct order, was quietly advancing at a walk. I had hardly time to say, 'There is the enemy,' when the general saw them, drew his sword, and shouting 'Gallop!' flew at the Austrian grenadiers. Having come to attack us unawares, they were so astounded at being thus unexpectedly attacked themselves that the foremost ranks had hardly time to bring their bayonets down. In a moment the three battalions were literally rolled over under the hoofs of the cuirassiers' horses, not one remaining on his legs. One only was killed ; we took all the rest prisoners, with three guns which they had brought to fortify the Pheasants' Island.

Their return to the offensive would have had awkward results for us, if the archduke had carried it out with more troops, and at the same time attacked Legrand's division in the vineyards. Unable to retreat by the bridges, our men would have undergone a severe reverse. But the Austrian general miscalculated when he flattered himself that a thousand of his men on the Pheasants' Island could have held it against three of our divisions, while Legrand's division, when attacked itself, would certainly have tried to force a passage. Thus, caught between two fires, the thousand grenadiers would equally have had to surrender, though General Guiton's unexpected attack doubtless saved much loss of life. Emboldened by their success, though not knowing the ground, the cuirassiers charged right up to the gates of Znaym, General Legrand's infantry hurrying up to their support, and the town was nearly carried. But superior forces, backed by powerful artillery, forced the French back to Alt-Schallersdorf and Klosterbruck, when Masséna sent Carra-Saint Cyr's infantry division to their support.

At this moment, the Emperor, posted on the heights of Zuckerhandel, ordered Marshal Marmont to debouch from Teswitz and get in touch with Masséna's right. The battle was spreading gradually, and in order to get nearer to it, Napoleon came to Teswitz. Masséna sent me to his Majesty to report, and I came back with orders to carry the town at any cost. Our battery on the Kuhberg was hammering it, and Marmont was about to assault by the valley of the Leska. As they beat the charge on all sides, the sound of the drums, muffled by the rain, mingled with the thunder. Our troops, in good spirits, advanced bravely against the battalions which were stoutly awaiting them in their position before Znaym ; only an occasional shot came from the houses. Everything foretold a bloody bayonet fight, when an officer from the Emperor galloped up with an order for Masséna to cease firing, as an armistice had

just been concluded. The marshal at once sent officers with the news to the different points of the line, and appointed me by name to go towards that one of our brigades which was nearest to the town and had the smallest distance to cross in order to reach the enemy. Coming up in the rear of these regiments I vainly tried to speak; my voice was drowned by cries of 'Vive l'Empereur!' which always preceded a fight, and the bayonets were already crossing. A moment longer, one of those terrible infantry tussles would take place, which once started, cannot be checked. I hesitated no longer, and passing through the files I got between the lines, which were on the point of meeting. As I was shouting 'Peace! peace!' and with my left hand giving the sign for a halt, suddenly a bullet from the outskirts of the town struck me on the wrist. Some of our officers, understanding at length that I brought the order to suspend hostilities, halted their companies; others, seeing the Austrian battalions within a hundred paces, were doubtful. At the same moment, an aide-de-camp from the archduke also came between the two lines, with a view of preventing the attack, and got a bullet through his shoulder, from the same quarter. I hastened towards him, and to make both sides see for what purpose we had been sent, we testified it by embracing each other. At sight of this, the officers on both sides had no more hesitation about ordering a halt. Flocking round us they learned that an armistice had been agreed on. There were mutual congratulations; the Austrians returned to Znaym, and our troops to their former position.

The blow which I received had been so sharp that I thought my wrist was broken; luckily it was nothing of the kind, but the bullet had injured the tendon. None of my many wounds have caused me so much pain; I had to carry my arm in a sling for six months. My wound, however, was far less severe than that of the Austrian aide-de-camp. He was quite a young man, full of pluck, and in spite of what had happened would come with me to Masséna, quite as much to see the famous old warrior as to carry a message which the archduke had sent by him. As we were going together to Klosterbruck, the Austrian officer, who was losing blood freely, nearly fainted, and I proposed to take him back to Znaym. But he persisted in coming with me to be treated by the French surgeons, who, he said, were much better than those of his own army. His name was Count d'Aspre, and he was the nephew of the general of that name who was killed at Wagram. Masséna received him kindly, and took every sort of care of him. As for me,

the marshal, seeing me wounded again, felt bound to agree with all the officers, and even the soldiers of the brigade, who praised my devotion in going between the two armies to prevent bloodshed. Napoleon came round the bivouacs in the evening, and expressed his satisfaction with me in lively terms, adding, 'You get wounded very often, but I will reward your zeal.' He had formed a plan of creating a military order of the Three Fleeces, the knights of which were bound to have had at least six wounds, and I learnt afterwards that his Majesty had entered me on the list of officers to receive this decoration, of which I shall have to speak hereafter. He asked to see M. d'Aspre, who had devoted himself as I had, and gave him many complimentary messages for the archduke.

While deeming it fortunate that the cuirassiers had reached the bridges just at the moment when the Austrian grenadiers were going to take possession of them, Napoleon was surprised that heavy cavalry should have been sent across the river on to a hill-side, where the only passage was a high road with steep sides among vineyards. No one, therefore, admitted having given the order; it came neither from the marshal nor from his chief of staff, and as the general of cuirassiers could not point out the officer who had brought it, the author of this lucky blunder remained unknown.

In the few minutes during which the grenadiers occupied Pheasants' Island, they captured three of our generals, Fririon, chief of Masséna's staff, Lasouski, and Stabenrath, and relieved them in a trice of their purses and silver spurs. The generals, who had been set free the next moment by our cuirassiers, treated their short captivity as a good joke.

I have mentioned that before I received my wound, and immediately after the brilliant charge of the cuirassiers, the marshal had ordered me to report it to the Emperor at Zuckerhandel. As the storm had made it impossible to ford the Taya, I had to cross it in front of Oblass, by the Pheasants' Island bridges, just as Marshal Marmont's troops were debouching from Teswitz. The enemy's artillery had opened a terrible fire upon them, so that the ground near the river was ploughed up by the balls. But as there was no means of taking another road without going a long way round, I took that line. I had left Oblass with Major de Talleyrand Périgord, who was on the imperial staff, and was returning after bringing an order to Masséna. He had already been that way, and offered to guide me. As he was going in front of me along the narrow path beside the right bank of the Taya, the enemy's fire increased, and we quickened

our pace. All of a sudden a confounded soldier of the transport corps, his horse laden with plundered chickens and ducks, came out from the willows on the river bank, a few paces from M. de Talleyrand, and went off along the path at full gallop. But his horse being knocked over by a cannon-ball, that of M. Talleyrand, who was just behind him, tumbled over its body, and came down with a crash. Seeing my companion fall, I dismounted to help him up, a difficult job, for one of his feet was entangled in the stirrup under the horse's body. The transport man, instead of helping us, ran and hid among the trees, and I was left alone to perform a task which was made all the more troublesome by the cannon-balls pitching all round us, and by the fact that the enemy's skirmishers were pushing ours back, and might come upon us. I could not, however, leave a comrade in this awkward position, so I set to work, and after incredible efforts I was lucky enough to get the horse up, and put M. de Talleyrand back in his saddle, and we resumed our course. I felt all the more deserving because I had never met my companion before; he expressed his gratitude in the warmest terms, and when we had got to Zuckerhandel, and I had delivered my message to the Emperor, I was congratulated by all the officers of the head-quarters staff. M. de Talleyrand had told them what I had done, and kept repeating, 'That's what you may call a first-rate comrade.' Some years afterwards, on my return from the exile to which I was condemned at the Restoration, M. de Talleyrand, then general of the royal guard, received me pretty coldly. However, when I met him twenty years later at Milan, whither I accompanied the Duke of Orleans, I bore him no grudge, and we shook hands. It was on the same journey that I met M. d'Aspre at Cremona; he was then a general in the Austrian service, having been till 1836 in that of Spain. Later on, he was second in command of the Army of Italy, under the famous Marshal Radetzky.

But to return to Znaym. The Austrians evacuated the town, and Masséna fixed his head-quarters there, his army corps encamping in the neighbourhood. By the armistice a third of the Austrian monarchy with eight million inhabitants had been provisionally given up to Napoleon—a powerful guarantee of peace.

M. d'Aspre, being too badly hurt to rejoin his own army, stayed at Znaym. I saw much of him; he was a quick-witted man, but rather excitable. I too had a good deal of pain from my wound, and could not ride; therefore, Masséna sent me with despatches for the Emperor, bidding me post to Vienna,

where he and the staff soon came. Our people and horses remained at Znaym. Peace took a long time to conclude, Napoleon wishing to crush Austria, while the Austrians were encouraged to hold out for better terms by the news that the English had landed in Holland and taken Flushing. Cambacérès, who governed France during the Emperor's absence, sent all available troops to the Scheldt, putting (much to Napoleon's displeasure) Bernadotte in command. The English withdrew before long.[1] The conferences were resumed, and went on no faster. We continued to occupy the country, and Masséna's head-quarters remained at Vienna till November 10. My wound prevented me from taking any part in the amusements of the place, but I was kindly treated by the Countess Stibar, on whom I was quartered. At Vienna I found my friend, General Sainte-Croix, who was kept some months in bed by his wound. He was quartered in the Lobkowitz palace, where Masséna was. I passed much time with him every day, and told him about the dislike which the marshal seemed to have conceived for me since the incident at Wagram. As he had great influence with Masséna, he used it in my favour, and this, with my conduct at Znaym, restored me to a fairly good place in the marshal's esteem; but then by overplain speaking I destroyed the good result, and revived the marshal's ill-will towards me.

As I have told you, the injury to his leg caused by the fall from his horse at Lobau had compelled Masséna to use a carriage at the battle of Wagram and the subsequent actions. In the first instance, artillery horses were to be harnessed to the carriage, but it was found that they were too long for the pole and not easy enough in their action, so four horses from the marshal's stable were substituted. Two soldiers from the transport train were to drive, and they were just getting into the saddle on the evening of July 4, when the marshal's own coachman and postilion declared that as he was using his own horses it was their business to drive. No representation of the danger into which they were running could deter them from their purpose; the coachman got on the box and the postilion mounted just as if they were going for a drive in the Bois de Boulogne. The two brave servants were in constant danger for eight days, especially at Wagram, where many hundred men were killed close to the carriage, and at Guntersdorf, where the ball which struck the carriage went through the

[1] [The unlucky 'Walcheren Expedition.']

coachman's overcoat, and another ball killed the horse under the postilion. Nothing seemed to frighten these two faithful attendants, whose devotion was admired by the whole army. Even the Emperor complimented them, and observed once to Masséna: 'There are 300,000 combatants on the field; now do you know who are the two bravest? Your coachman and your postilion. For all the rest of us are here in pursuance of our duty, while these two men might have excused themselves from being exposed to death. Their merit is therefore greater than that of anyone else.' To the men themselves he called out: 'You are two brave fellows!' Napoleon would certainly have rewarded them, but he could only give them money, and he probably thought that this might offend Masséna, in whose service the danger had been incurred, and, indeed, it was the marshal's business, and all the more so that he had an enormous fortune; 200,000 francs as army leader, another 200,000 as Duke of Rivoli, and 500,000 as Prince of Essling. But for all that he allowed two months to pass without telling the men what he meant to do for them. One day when I and several of the aides-de-camp happened to be by Sainte-Croix's bedside, Masséna came into the room, and as we chatted over the events of the campaign, he said how fortunate it was that he had followed my advice and gone on to the field in a carriage instead of being carried by grenadiers, and thence he naturally went on to speak of the plucky conduct of his coachman and postilion. He ended by saying that he wished to reward them well, and was going to give each of them 400 francs. Then, turning to me, he had the face to ask if the two men would not be pleased? I had better have held my tongue, or merely suggested a rather higher sum; but I made the mistake of speaking too plainly and mischievously into the bargain. I knew perfectly well that Masséna only intended to give them 400 francs down; but I answered that with a pension of 400 francs added to their savings, the coachman and postilion would be secured from want in their old age. The eyes of a tigress who sees her young attacked by the hunter are not more terrible than were Masséna's on hearing me speak thus. He leapt from his chair, exclaiming: 'Wretch! do you want to ruin me? What! an annuity of 400 francs? No, no, no: 400 francs once for all!' Most of my comrades prudently held their peace; but General Sainte-Croix and Major Ligniville declared plainly that the proposed reward was unworthy of the marshal, and that he ought to make it an annuity. At this Masséna could restrain himself no longer; he rushed about the room in a rage,

upsetting everything in his way, even large furniture, and cried, 'You want to ruin me!' His last words as he left the room were, 'I would sooner see you all shot, and get a bullet through my arm, than bind myself to give an annuity of 400 francs to anyone. Go to the devil the lot of you!' Next day he came among us again, very calm outwardly, for no one could play a part better; but from that day forward General Sainte-Croix lost much of his esteem, and he bore a grudge against Ligniville which he let him see the next year in Portugal. As for me he was most angry with me of all, because I was the first to mention the annuity. The story travelled from mouth to mouth till it reached the Emperor, and one day when Masséna was dining with him, Napoleon kept bantering him about his avarice, and said that he understood he had at any rate given a good pension to the two brave servants who drove his carriage at Wagram. Then the marshal answered that he was going to give them each an annuity of 400 francs; so he did it without having to be shot through the arm. He was all the more angry with us, and often said to us with a sardonic laugh, 'Ah! my fine fellows, if I followed your good advice you would soon have me ruined.'

Seeing that the Austrian plenipotentiaries kept putting off the conclusion of the treaty of peace, the Emperor kept ready for war, bringing up numerous reinforcements, which he inspected daily at the parade held in the court of the palace at Schönbrunn. The recruits attracted many sightseers, who were allowed to approach too freely; thus one day a student named Frederick Stabs, son of a bookseller at Naumburg, and member of the secret society called the Tugendbund, or League of Virtue, took advantage of this lack of supervision to slip into the group which surrounded the Emperor. General Rapp had twice told him not to come so near, and on pushing him away for the third time he felt that the young man had arms concealed under his clothes. Being arrested, he confessed that he wished to deliver Germany from the Emperor's yoke by killing him. Napoleon would have spared his life and treated him as insane; but as the doctors declared that he was not mad, and the man himself persisted in saying that if he escaped he should try to accomplish what had been a longstanding purpose, he was tried by court martial and shot.

The treaty of peace was signed on October 4; the Emperor left Austria on the 22nd, and it was ten days later before the troops had left the place. Then Masséna permitted his officers to return to France. I left Vienna November 10, driving as

far as Strasburg with my comrade Ligniville. I had left my servant behind to bring one of my horses on to Paris. From Strasburg I was afraid to continue my journey alone, for my arm was much swelled, and I was in great pain. Fortunately, I found at my hotel the surgeon-major of the 10th Chasseurs, who was kind enough to dress my wound and to share my carriage as far as Paris, taking care of me on the way. The doctor left the army, and settled in Chantilly, where I met him, twenty years later, at the table of the Duke of Orleans, as commandant of the national guard. I was still very poorly when I reached Paris, but rest and my mother's care soon made me well.

Thus ended the year 1809. Now, if you recollect that I began at Astorga, in Spain, during the campaign against the English, and then took part in the siege of Saragossa, where I got a bullet through my body; if you consider that I had next to cross part of Spain, and the whole of France and Germany; that I was present at the battle of Eckmühl; mounted the walls of Ratisbon; performed the risky passage of the Danube at Mölk; fought for two days at Essling, where I was wounded in the leg; then was engaged for sixty hours at the battle of Wagram; and, lastly, was wounded in the arm at the action at Znaym, you will agree that this year had been very eventful for me, and had seen me pretty frequently in danger.

CHAPTER LII.

ALTHOUGH the Minister of War had assured the marshal that everything was ready for the campaign in the Peninsula, it was nothing of the kind, and the commander-in-chief had to stay a fortnight at Valladolid, looking after the departure of the troops and the transport of stores and ammunition. At last the head-quarters were removed to Salamanca, where my brother and I were quartered with the Count of Montezuma, a lineal descendant of the last Emperor of Mexico. The marshal wasted three more weeks at Salamanca waiting for General Reynier's corps. These delays, while hurtful to us, were all in favour of the English.

The last Spanish town towards the Portuguese frontier is Ciudad Rodrigo, a fortress, if the strength of its works alone be considered, of the third class, but having great importance owing to its position between Spain and Portugal, in a district with few roads, and those very difficult for large guns and the apparatus of a siege train. It was, however, absolutely necessary that the French should get possession of the place. With this resolve, Masséna left Salamanca about the middle of June, and caused Rodrigo to be invested by Ney's corps, while Junot covered the operations from the attacks of an Anglo-Portuguese army, which was encamped a few leagues from us, near the Portuguese fortress of Almeida, under Lord Wellington. Ciudad Rodrigo was defended by a brave old Spanish general of Irish origin, Andrew Herrasti.

The French, unable to believe that the English would have come so near the place just to see it captured under their eyes, expected a battle. None took place; and on July 10, the Spanish guns having been silenced, a part of the town being on fire, and the counterscarp overthrown by the explosion of a powder magazine for a space of thirty-six feet, while the ditch was filled with the ruins and the breach widely opened, Masséna resolved to give the signal for the assault. To this end Marshal Ney formed a column of 1,500 volunteers, who were to mount the breach first. Assembled at the foot of the rampart, these

brave men were awaiting the signal to attack, when an officer expressed his fear that the breach was not yet practicable. Thereupon three of our soldiers mounted to the top of it, looked into the town, made such examination as was useful, and fired their muskets, rejoining their comrades without being wounded, although this bold feat was performed in broad daylight. Kindled by this example, the assaulting column advanced at a run and was on the point of dashing into the town when General Herrasti capitulated. The defence of the garrison had been very fine, but the Spanish troops composing it had good reason to complain of their desertion by the English, who had merely sent reconnoitring parties towards our camp, without attempting any serious diversion. The skirmishes resulting from these nearly always turned out to our advantage. One of them was so creditable to our infantry, that the English historian Napier has been unable to refrain from doing homage to the valour of the men who took part in it. On July 11 the English General Craufurd, who was operating in the country between Ciudad Rodrigo and Villa de Puerco, at the head of six squadrons, having perceived at day-break a company of French grenadiers, about 120 strong, marching in the open, ordered two squadrons to attack them. But the French had time to form square, and were so cool that the enemy's officers could hear Captain Gouache and his sergeant exhorting their people to take good aim. The cavalry charged with ardour, but received such a terrible volley that they left the ground piled with dead, and had to retire. Seeing two English squadrons repulsed by a handful of French, Colonel Talbot advanced furiously with four squadrons of the 14th Dragoons and attacked Captain Gouache. Firmly awaiting the charge, he ordered a volley at point-blank range, which killed Colonel Talbot and some thirty of his men; after which the brave Gouache retired in good order towards the French camp without the English general venturing to attack again. This brilliant affair was much talked of in the two armies.[1] When the Emperor heard of it he raised Captain Gouache to major, promoted the other officers, and gave eight decorations in the company.

After having mentioned a fact so glorious for the French arms, I ought to report one no less creditable to the Spaniards. The *guerrillero* Don Julian Sanchez, having voluntarily shut

[1] [See Napier, xi. ch. 4. He relates the incident in much the same terms, only making the strength of the French rather greater and the English loss a good deal less.]

himself in Ciudad Rodrigo with his two hundred horsemen, did good service by making frequent attacks on our trenches. At length, when the want of forage caused the presence of 200 horses to be a trouble to the garrison, Sanchez left the town with his men one dark night, and, crossing the bridge over the Agueda, the approaches to which Ney had omitted to block, fell on our outposts, killed several men, pierced our lines, and went off to join the English army.

The siege of Rodrigo nearly cost me my life; not by the enemy's fire, but by reason of an illness which I contracted in the following manner. The neighbourhood of the town, being infertile, is thickly inhabited, and there had been much difficulty in finding quarters for the marshal near the trenches. Finally he was put into an isolated building situated in a spot commanding the town and suburbs. As the siege promised to last long, and there was no lodging for the staff close by, we hired, at our own cost, some planks and beams, and erected a large room, where we were sheltered from sun and rain, and slept on boards, which, though rough, kept us clear of the damp rising from the soil. But the marshal was inconvenienced from the outset in his stone building by an intolerable stench, and on inquiry it was found that the building had been used to keep sheep in. Masséna proceeded to set his affections on our extempore house; but, not liking to use his authority to eject us, came to see us on some pretext or other, and exclaimed as he entered: 'Well, my lads, you have a nice place here! May I beg for a corner to put my bed and desk in?' This, as we saw, was sharing with the lion, and we left our excellent abode in haste, to take up our quarters in the old sheep-stall. It was paved with small stones, their interstices clogged with filth, and highly uncomfortable to lie on, from the want of long straw in Spain.[1] Forced thus to lie on the bare ground and inhale the fetid exhalations rising from it, we all became more or less unwell before long. I was much the worst; for in these warm countries fever always tries most those who have already suffered from it, and my Valladolid attack returned in an aggravated form. Still I resolved to take my share in the siege, and remained on duty. Duty was often pretty laborious, especially when we had to carry orders in the night to our division on the left bank of the Agueda, which was carrying out the necessary works for the reduction of the Franciscan convent, used by the enemy as a bastion. In order to reach this point

[1] [*Cf.* p. 85.]

from the head-quarters without coming under the fire of the place, it was necessary to make a long wind to a bridge which our troops had constructed, or else cross by a ford. One night, when all was ready for the assault, and Ney only awaited Masséna's order to give the signal, it happened to be my turn for duty, and I had to take the order. It was a dark, hot night; I was in a high fever, and streaming with perspiration when I reached the ford. I had only once crossed it in daylight, but the dragoon orderly who was with me had crossed it several times, and offered to guide me. This he did very well till he got to the middle, where it was not more than two or three feet deep; but then he went wrong in the darkness, and our horses, stepping on big slippery stones, fell and we were in the water. There was no fear of drowning; we scrambled on to the bank with ease; but we were wet through. In any other circumstances I should only have laughed at this involuntary bath; but, though not cold, the water checked the perspiration, and I was seized with a shivering fit. I reached the convent and passed the night in the open air beside Marshal Ney. The attacking column was commanded by a major named Lefrançois, whom I knew well. The day before he had shown me a letter from his sweetheart announcing that her father agreed to their marriage as soon as Lefrançois was lieutenant-colonel. It was with this object that he had asked permission to lead the storming party. The attack was brisk, the defence stubborn. After three hours' fighting our troops remained in possession of the convent, but poor Lefrançois was slain. His loss was much felt in the army, and grieved me deeply.

In hot countries sunrise is usually preceded by piercing cold. I was the more sensitive to it that day for having passed the night in wet clothes, so that when I returned to head-quarters I was much out of sorts. Still I had to report the result of the attack to Masséna before getting into dry things. He was at that moment taking his morning walk with General Fririon, his chief of staff. In their interest in my story, or wishing to get a closer view, they gradually drew near the town, and we were not more than a cannon-shot away when the marshal let me go and rest. Hardly had I gone fifty paces from them when a gigantic shell, launched from the ramparts, fell close to them. At the fearful noise of its explosion I turned round, and, seeing nothing of the marshal and the general, who were concealed by a cloud of dust and smoke, I thought they were killed, and ran to the place. To my astonishment I found them alive and none the worse, save for some contusions from the stones which the bursting

shell had thrown up. They were, however, both covered with earth, especially Masséna. He had lost an eye shooting[1] some years before, and his remaining eye was so full of sand that he could not see his way, while the bruises he had received from the stones prevented his walking. It was necessary to get him out of range, however, and, as he was small and thin, I managed, ill as I was, to take him on my shoulders and carry him out of reach of the enemy's shot. I went on and told my comrades, and they brought the marshal in without the men finding out the danger which their commander-in-chief had run.

The fatigue and excitement of the last twenty-four hours increased my fever a good deal; still I braced myself up, and contrived to hold out till the surrender of Ciudad Rodrigo, on July 9.[2] But as from this day forward the excitement which had kept me up so far had nothing more to feed on, I must needs give in to the fever. This became so alarming that I had to be carried to the one house in the town which the French shells had left intact. It was the only time that I have been seriously ill without being wounded, and this time my life was despaired of, and I was left at Ciudad Rodrigo while the army crossed the Coa and marched on Almeida. This place not being more than four leagues as the crow flies from Ciudad Rodrigo, I could hear from my sick-bed the uproar of the cannon, and every report made me writhe with rage. Often did I try to rise, and the fruitlessness of the attempts, by showing me how utterly weak I was, increased my wretchedness. My brother and my comrades, kept by their duty at Almeida, were far away, and my solitude was only broken by the short visits of Dr. Blancheton, who, clever as he was, could only treat me very inefficiently for want of medicaments. The air of the town was tainted by the stench of many thousands of corpses which lay unburied among the rubbish of the ruined houses. A temperature of more than eighty-five degrees, aggravating these causes of unhealthiness, soon brought typhus. Both the garrison and such of the inhabitants as had remained in the place to look after what was left of their property suffered terribly. I was left to the care of my servant, and, with all his zeal, he could not get me what I required. My illness increased and I became delirious. I remember that there were in my room some large pictures representing the four quarters of the earth. Africa, which was right in front of my bed, had at her feet a huge lion, the eyes of which seemed to be fixed on me, while I could not take mine from them.

[1] [See p. 484.]

[2] [July 11, according to Napier.]

At last one day I thought I saw him move, and, wishing to anticipate his attack, I tottered up, took my sword, and, striking with edge and point, I hewed the lion to pieces. After this truly Quixotic feat I fell half-fainting on the floor, where the doctor found me. He had all the pictures removed from the room, after which I grew quieter. My lucid moments were not less terrible; it was painful to think of my melancholy situation and utter loneliness. Death on the battlefield seemed sweet to me compared to that which I expected, and I regretted not to have fallen like a soldier. To die in a bed of fever while there was fighting near me seemed to me a horrible, almost a shameful thing.

I had been in this dreadful position for a month, when on August 26, towards nightfall, a fearful explosion was heard. The earth trembled till I thought the house was coming down. It was the fortress of Almeida which had just blown up through the explosion of a huge powder magazine, and the disturbance was distinctly felt at Rodrigo, from which one may judge the effects which it had produced in Almeida itself. The unlucky place was destroyed from top to bottom; not six houses remained standing. Six hundred of the garrison were killed, and many wounded; some fifty French employed on the siege works were struck by splinters of stone. In pursuit of instructions from his Government, Lord Wellington, with the view of sparing English blood at the cost of that of his allies, after having entrusted the defence of Ciudad Rodrigo to the Spanish troops, who had just surrendered, had left that of Almeida to the Portuguese, Colonel Cox, the governor, being the only Englishman in the place. That brave officer, not suffering himself to be intimidated by the horrible disaster which had just destroyed almost all his means of resistance, proposed to the garrison to continue their defence behind the ruins of the city. But the Portuguese troops, terrified, and led away by their officers, especially by Bernardo Costa, the lieutenant-governor, and José Bareiros, commanding the artillery, refused, and Colonel Cox, being unsupported, was compelled to capitulate.

It has been said that the French commander had tampered with the Portuguese officers, and that the explosion was brought about by their treason; but this is a mistake. The only cause of the fire was neglect on the part of the garrison, who, instead of fetching the powder barrels one by one from the cellars and shutting the door behind each, had been imprudent enough to roll a score of them at a time into the courtyard of the castle. It seems that a French shell falling on one of the barrels exploded it, and that the others forming a train

right up to the middle of the magazine, caused the explosion which wrecked the town and injured the fortifications. However that may be, the English brought the two Portuguese officers to trial, Costa being condemned and shot, while Bareiros succeeded in escaping. These two officers were certainly not guilty of treason; at most they could be reproached with not having continued a hopeless defence, the only result of which could have been to preserve the ruins of Almeida for a few days longer, while the English army was tranquilly encamped two leagues from the place without making any movement to aid them.

After having thus got possession of Almeida, Marshal Masséna, not being able to establish himself among the ruins of the town, moved his head-quarters to Fort Concepcion, on the Spanish frontier. The French[1] had destroyed part of the fortifications, but the buildings were sufficiently intact to afford lodging. There Masséna made preparations for his expedition to Lisbon. My brother and my comrades took advantage of this interval to come and see me. Their presence increased the soothing effect which the capture of Almeida had produced on my spirits. The fever disappeared, and in a few days I was convalescent. I was eager for change of air, and, with the aid of my brother and some of my friends, I contrived to ride the short distance to Fort Concepcion. My comrades, who had feared that they would never see me again, received me most affectionately; but the marshal, whom I had not seen since the day when I had carried him out of the range of the guns of Rodrigo, never said a word to me about my illness. After a fortnight in the fort in good air and able to rest, I recovered my full health, and was ready for the campaign in Portugal. Before relating the events of this famous and disastrous campaign I must briefly make you acquainted with what had taken place in the Peninsula since the Emperor left it in 1809.

[The next two chapters in the original are mainly compiled from Napier, book vi. chap. 5-7 and vii. chap. 1-2. They contain the account of the capture of Oporto by Wellington, and bring the history up to the time of Marbot's joining the army in the Peninsula.]

[1] [Napier would seem to imply that Craufurd had blown up Fort Concepcion before retiring to the Coa.]

CHAPTER LIII.

Towards the end of 1809 the Emperor had placed all the army corps in Spain under the orders of his brother Joseph; but as he was no soldier, Napoleon only allowed him a nominal authority, and, by making Soult chief of the staff, gave him the real command of all the French troops in the south of Spain. While these were successful in capturing Seville and Cordova, and even investing Cadiz, the seat of the governing junta, General Suchet was administering Aragon and Valentia, most of the fortified towns in which he had taken by siege. Saint-Cyr and Augereau were active in Catalonia, where the warlike population was defending itself with vigour. The troops of the Young Guard were steadily keeping up an irregular warfare against the guerillas of Navarre and the northern provinces. Generals Bonnet and Drouet occupied Biscay in the Asturias; Ney held the province of Salamanca, and Junot that of Valladolid. The French had evacuated Galicia, the country being too poor to maintain our troops. Such was, in brief, the position of our armies in Spain when Masséna entered Portugal after taking Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida. His troops were composed as follows. The second corps of veterans from Austerlitz, who had been under Soult the previous year at Oporto, and whom General Reynier now commanded, with Merle and Heudelet as generals of division; the sixth corps, also veterans, commanded by Ney, the divisions being under Marchand, Loison, and Mermet; the eighth corps, composed of moderately good troops, commanded in chief by Junot, with Solignac and Clausel, the future marshal, as generals of division; two divisions of cavalry under Montbrun, and a powerful field artillery directed by General Eblé. General Lasouski commanded the engineers.

Deducting the garrisons left at Rodrigo, Almeida, and Salamanca, with the sick, the total number of combatants amounted to 50,000, with sixty guns and a great quantity of ammunition chests. This was far too large a train for a rough country like Portugal, where there were scarcely any high roads. Almost

the only communications are narrow, rocky paths, often very steep, and everything is transported on mule-back. There are even districts where roads are absolutely unknown. Lastly, except in certain valleys, the soil is mostly arid, and offers insufficient resources for maintaining an army. Masséna had therefore every reason to go through the least difficult and most productive country. He did, however, just the contrary.

Having left the neighbourhood of Almeida on September 14, 1810, the army assembled next day at Celorico, where it saw the rich valley of the Mondego opening before it and might march on Coimbra by Sampayo and Ponte de Murcelha, over roads which, if not good, were at least tolerable. But under the influence of Major Pelet, his adviser, the marshal left the practicable country where the troops might have lived in comfort, and went off to the right into the mountains of Viseu, where the roads are the worst in Portugal. One need only look at the map to see how unreasonable it was to go by Viseu on the way from Celorico to Coimbra; a mistake all the greater from the fact that Viseu is separated from the Sierra d'Alcoba by high hills, which the army might have avoided by marching down the valley of the Mondego. The neighbourhood of Viseu produces no corn or vegetables, and the troops found nothing there but lemons and grapes—not very sustaining food.

Masséna's expedition very nearly came to an end at Viseu through lack of foresight on the marshal's part. He made his artillery park march on the extreme right of the column outside the masses of infantry, its only escort being an Irish battalion in the French service and a company of French grenadiers. Marching in single file more than a league in length, the park was proceeding slowly and laboriously by difficult roads, when suddenly on its right flank appeared the English colonel Trant, with 4,000 or 5,000 Portuguese militia. If the enemy, profiting by his superior strength, had surrounded the convoy and made a resolute attack, all the artillery, ammunition, and provisions of the army would have been captured or destroyed. But Colonel Trant, as he himself said afterwards, could not suppose that a general of Masséna's experience could have left unsupported a convoy so essential to the safety of his army, and supposing that a powerful escort must be close at hand, he dared to advance only with extreme caution. He confined himself, therefore, to attacking only the leading company of grenadiers, who answered by a heavy fire, killing some fifty men. The militia men recoiled in alarm, and Trant, doing what he should have done at first, overlapped a portion of the

convoy. As he went forward he discovered the weakness of the escort, and sent a flag of truce to the commander, summoning him to surrender or he would attack him all along the line. The French officer adroitly consented to negotiate, in order to give the Irish time to come up from the rear of the convoy. They appeared at length, coming up at the double. As soon as the French officer saw them he broke off the conference, saying: 'I cannot treat any further; here is my general coming to my support with 8,000 men.' Each resumed his position, but Trant shortly left his and made off, thinking he had to do with the advanced guard of a strong column. Thus the artillery was saved, but the army soon learnt the danger in which it had been, and the excitement was great. Ney, Junot, Reynier, and Montbrun went straight off to Viseu and addressed strong remonstrances to General Fririon, chief of the staff. He, however, asserted that, in spite of his demands, no information of the march of the columns had been given him, everything being settled by Masséna and Pelet. Horrified and indignant at this state of things, the commanders of the four corps called on Masséna with a view of making well-deserved remarks on it. Ney was the speaker, and from the aide-de-camp's room we could hear him protesting; but Masséna, foreseeing that the conversation would become animated, took the generals into a more distant apartment. I do not know what was decided, but it appears that the commander-in-chief promised to change his mode of action, for in a quarter of an hour we saw Masséna walking quietly in the garden, taking the arm of each of his lieutenants in turn. Unanimity seemed to be restored, but it was not for long.

As I have already said, childish reasons sometimes produce great and mischievous results. We had a striking example of it, which influenced the result of a campaign which was to have driven the English out of Portugal, but which by its failure increased their confidence in Wellington, while it seasoned the troops who did most to bring about our defeat in the following years. All the army knew that Masséna had brought Mme. N—— to Portugal with him. This lady, having crossed the whole of Spain in a carriage, and having remained at Salamanca during the sieges of Rodrigo and Almeida, thought fit to follow Masséna on horseback as soon as he set out to march through a country impracticable for carriages, which produced a very bad effect. The marshal, who generally took his meals alone with her, had had his table laid that day under a clump of lemon trees, the aide-de-camp's table being a hundred yards

away in the same garden. Dinner was about to be served, when the commander-in-chief, wishing probably to cement the good relations which had just been established between himself and his lieutenants, remarked that as each of them had several leagues to go in order to reach his head-quarters it would be best for them to dine with him before starting. All four accepted, and Masséna, in order to prevent any further remarks on the incident of the convoy, ordered that for once the aide-de-camp's table should be set by his.

So far all went well; but just before sitting down Masséna sent for Mme. N——. On seeing the generals she drew back, but he said to Ney, 'My dear marshal, kindly take Madame.' Ney turned pale, and nearly burst out; but, restraining himself, he led the lady by the finger-tips to the table, and placed her, by Masséna's direction, on his right. During the whole meal, however, Ney said not a word to her, but talked to Montbrun, his neighbour on the left. Mme. N——, who was too quick-witted not to see how false a position she was in, was seized with a nervous attack, and fell in a faint. Then Ney, Reynier, Montbrun, and Junot left the garden, not without a vigorous and audible expression of his views on the part of Ney. Reynier and Montbrun also said plainly what they thought; Junot spoke so bitterly, that I took the liberty of reminding him of the way in which he had met Mme. N—— at Valladolid. He answered, laughing, 'Because an old hussar like me has his games sometimes, that is no reason for Masséna to imitate them. Besides, I must stand by my colleagues.' From that day forward the four generals were on the worst of terms with Masséna, who, on his side, bore them no goodwill.[1]

This quarrel among the chiefs could not fail to aggravate the causes making for the ill-success of the campaign. These arose mainly from an utter want of topographical knowledge of the districts in which we were fighting; arising from the omission of the Portuguese Government—either as a defensive measure, or through indolence—to have good maps made of the kingdom. The only one in existence was as bad as could be; so that we had, as it were, to feel our way along. There were officers in plenty who had campaigned in Portugal with Soult and Junot, but they had not been in the provinces where we were, and could be of no use as guides. On the staff we had

[1] [Confirmation of these details will be found in M. Thiers's review of the causes which led to the French defeats in Portugal. (*Consulat et Empire*, book xl.)]

some thirty Portuguese officers, among them two generals—the Marquis of Alorna and Count Pamplona, who had come to France in 1808 with the contingent furnished to Napoleon by the court of Lisbon. Though they had only obeyed the orders of the former Government they were proscribed by the Commission of Regency, and thus had returned to seek possession of their confiscated goods in the train of the army. Masséna had hoped to get some useful information from these exiles; but except in the neighbourhood of Lisbon they knew nothing of their own country; while the English, who had been going all about it for two years, knew its configuration perfectly, gaining thereby a great advantage over us.

Another cause told no less powerfully against us. Lord Wellington, being allowed a perfectly free hand by the Government, used it to compel all the people to leave their houses, destroy all provisions and mills, and retire with their cattle to Lisbon on the approach of the French, who thus were unable to obtain any information, and had to beat the country to a great distance in order to get provisions. The Spaniards had constantly refused to adopt this terrible means of resistance at the instance of the English; but the Portuguese were more docile. We thus crossed vast districts without seeing a single inhabitant; such an exodus had not been seen within human memory. The city of Viseu was totally deserted when we entered it, yet Masséna halted the army there for six days. This was a second mistake added to that which he had committed in leaving the valley of the Mondego. If on the morrow of his arrival at Viseu the French general had made a rapid march and attacked the Alcoba, on which Lord Wellington had then very few troops, the fault might have been repaired. But our delay of six days allowed the English to ford the Mondego above Ponte de Murcelha, and to unite their army on the ridges of the Alcoba at Busaco. No military writer of any country has been able to account for Masséna's inactivity of nearly a week at Viseu, but the marshal's staff can testify that Mme. N——'s fatigue had much to do with delaying Masséna and keeping him at that place. The country was in arms, and it would have been impossible to leave her behind without exposing her to the danger of being captured. Moreover, when he had made up his mind to start, Masséna made only very short marches, halting first at Tondella. The next day, September 26, after establishing his head-quarters at Mortagoa, on the right bank of the Criz, he lost precious time in securing the lady's quarters; and it was not till two in the

afternoon that he set out with his staff for the outposts—five good leagues off, at the foot of the Alcoba.

This mountain ridge, about three leagues in length, abuts upon the Mondego to the east, and to the west is connected with detached hills of great steepness, impassable for an army. At the highest point is a convent, named Saco. The central part of the summit forms a sort of plateau, on which the English artillery was posted. It had freedom of action along the whole front of the position, and its range extended to beyond the Criz. A road passing round the ridge of Busaco afforded easy communication between the various portions of the enemy's army, while the slope facing towards the direction from which the French approached was, from its sharpness, well adapted for defence. The enemy's left rested on the hills above Barria; his centres and reserves on the convent; his right on the heights, a little in rear of San Antonio de Cantara. So formidable was the position that the English had some fear that the French commander-in-chief might not venture to attack.

When Masséna came up on the evening of the 26th he found that the army had in his absence been posted by Ney as follows: the 6th corps on the right, at the village of Moira; the centre facing the convent; Reynier's corps on the left, at San Antonio; and the 8th corps, under Junot, with the artillery, marching to take up a position in reserve in rear of the centre. The cavalry, under Montbrun, was at Bienfaita.

When an army has undergone a check it is but too common to find the generals throwing the blame on each other. This happened after Busaco, and thus it is necessary to mention here the opinion expressed before the battle by Masséna's lieutenants, who, having first urged him on to the commission of his greatest blunder, after the unfortunate event criticised his conduct. I have said that on the day but one before the battle the corps under Ney and Reynier were at the foot of the Alcoba, and in presence of the enemy. While impatiently waiting for the commander-in-chief, these two generals exchanged in writing their respective views on the position of the Anglo-Portuguese army. There exists a letter,[1] dated on the morning of September 26, in which Marshal Ney says to General Reynier, 'If I were in command I would attack without a moment's hesitation.' Both expressed the same feeling in their correspondence with Masséna: 'The position is far less formidable than it looks, and if I had not been in so subordinate a position I would have

[1] [It will be found in the Appendix to Napier, vol. iii.]

carried it without awaiting your orders.' Relying on the assurance of Generals Reynier and Junot that nothing could be easier, Masséna made (although the contrary has since been affirmed) nor the smallest attempt to reconnoitre, and, merely replying, 'Very well, I will be back at daybreak, and we will attack,' he turned and rode back to Mortagoa. Great was the astonishment at this abrupt departure, for, seeing Masséna join his troops, who were encamped within cannon-shot of the enemy, everyone supposed that he would use the remaining daylight to study the position which he had to carry, and would stay with the army. In going off thus, without seeing anything for himself, he no doubt made a great mistake; but I do not think that, after lulling to sleep his usual vigilance and urging him to attack, his lieutenants had any right to blame him as they afterwards did. On the contrary, they might well have found fault with themselves; for, after spending two days at the foot of the Alcoba, they advised a front attack, in spite of the steepness, and made no inquiries as to the possibility of turning it—a course, as you will presently see, offering no difficulty.

It was a misfortune for the army that General Sainte-Croix was not then with Masséna. His instinct for war would certainly have led him, taking advantage of the marshal's confidence in him, to induce him to abandon the idea of attacking directly so formidable a position before making sure that it could not be turned. But he was with his brigade some leagues to the rear, escorting a convoy.

Hardly had the commander-in-chief with his staff left the army than night came on—and Masséna had only one eye and was not a good horseman. Our road was strewn with large stones and pieces of rock, so we had, in the darkness, to go for more than two hours at a walk to accomplish the five leagues to Mortagoa. As we went along I meditated sadly on the probable results of the battle which we were going to fight on the morrow at such a disadvantage, and imparted my reflections in a low voice to my friend Ligniville and to General Fririon. We were all most anxious that Masséna should alter his dispositions; but no officer save Pelet was allowed to submit any suggestions to him directly. Yet the matter appeared urgent, and we decided to employ an artifice, which we had sometimes used with success, for bringing the truth indirectly to his notice. Agreeing upon our parts, we got near the marshal, feigning not to see him in the darkness; then we began to talk about the coming battle, and I said that I was sorry the commander-in-chief intended to assault the position in front without being

certain that it could not be turned. Then General Fririon, playing his part as arranged, answered that Ney and Reynier had stated positively that there was no other way to get past, to which Ligniville and I replied that we could not believe that, for it was impossible that the people of Mortagoa should have lived for centuries devoid of direct communication with Boialva, and with no other way to the Oporto road than by Busaco, over the steepest part of the mountains. I added that when I had made the same remark to the aides-de-camp of Ney and Reynier, and asked which of them had reconnoitred the extreme left of the enemy's position, not one answered, from which I concluded that no one had visited that part. If Masséna saw badly his hearing was extremely keen, and, as we hoped, he had not missed one word of our talk. So much struck was he, that he came up to our group, and joining in the conversation, admitted—cautious as he was—that he had assented too easily to the plan of assaulting in front. He said that he would counter-order this, and that if a way could be found of turning the position he would let the army rest next day, and on the following night would concentrate it opposite the vulnerable point and attack unawares. No doubt there would be a day's delay, but the chances of success would be better and the probable loss lighter.

So determined did the marshal appear, that when we reached Mortagoa he bade Ligniville and me try to find some inhabitant who could show us a road to Boialva without passing Busaco. It was a difficult job, for the inhabitants had all fled at the approach of the French, and the extreme darkness was against our search. At length, however, we found in a monastery an old gardener who had stayed to take care of a sick monk. He brought us to this monk, who answered our questions freely; he had often been from Mortagoa and Boialva by a good road which branched off a short league from the place where we were. He was all the more surprised at our not knowing this, that part of our army in going from Viseu to Mortagoa had passed the turning. Guided by the old gardener, we went to verify the monk's statement, and found that an excellent road actually went in the direction of the mountains and appeared to pass round the enemy's left. Yet Marshal Ney had stayed two days at Mortagoa without exploring this road, a knowledge of which would have saved us many disasters.

Ligniville and I, delighted at our discovery, hastened to report it to the marshal; but we had been away more than an hour, and we found him with Major Pelet, surrounded by maps

and plans. Pelet said that he had examined the mountains with a telescope by daylight and had seen in their configuration no sign of a pass to our right; moreover, he could not believe that Marshal Ney had not explored the neighbourhood while he was at Mortagoa, and as he had not found a pass it was clear that none existed, nor could we convince him of the contrary. In vain did we offer to go round and ascend the hill which the monk assured us was less steep than that of Busaco, or even to go as far as Boialva if they would give us three battalions of the head-quarters guard. In vain did General Fririon beg the marshal to accept this offer: all was useless. Masséna was very tired, he said that it was near midnight and that we must be off at four o'clock to reach the camp by daybreak, and with that he went to bed. Never did I pass a more melancholy night; and my comrades were as sad as I. At last the hour came for our start, and we reached the outposts with the first morning light of September 27, an ill-omened day which was to behold one of the most terrible reverses which the French army ever suffered.

CHAPTER LIV.

On finding himself in front of the position which he had scarcely examined on the previous day Masséna appeared to hesitate, and, coming up to the place where I was chatting with General Fririon, he said sadly, 'Your suggestion of yesterday was worth considering.' Our hopes rekindled by these few words, we doubled our efforts to induce the commander-in-chief to turn the mountain by Boialva, and he was already coming over to our way of thinking, when Ney, Reynier, and Pelet came up and interrupted our talk with the remark that all was ready for the attack. Masséna made a few more remarks, but at length, overborne by his lieutenants, and fearing, no doubt, that he might be blamed for letting slip a victory which they declared to be certain, he gave orders towards seven o'clock to open fire.

The 2nd corps, under Reynier, attacked the enemy's right; Ney their left and centre. The French troops were drawn up on stony ground, sloping steeply down to a great ravine which separated us from the Alcoba, which was lofty, steep, and occupied by the enemy. From their commanding position they could see all our movements, while we saw only their outposts half-way up the hill between the convent of Busaco and the ravine, which at this point was so deep that the naked eye could hardly make out the movements of troops who were marching through it, and so narrow that the English bullets carried right across it. It might be regarded as an immense natural ditch, serving as the first line of defence to the natural fortifications formed by great rocks cut almost into a vertical wall. Besides this, our artillery, engaged in very bad roads and obliged to fire upwards, could render very little service; while the infantry had to contend not only against a mass of obstacles and the roughest possible ascent, but also against the best marksmen in Europe. Up to this time the English were the only troops who were perfectly practised in the use of small arms, whence their firing was far more accurate than that of any other infantry.

Although you might expect that the rules of war would be

alike among civilised nations, they do, as a fact, vary immensely even in identical circumstances. Thus, when the French have to defend a position they first garnish the front and flanks with skirmishers, and then crown the heights conspicuously with their main body and reserves, which has the serious inconvenience of letting the enemy know the vulnerable point of the line. The method employed in similar cases by the English seems to me far preferable, as was often demonstrated in the Peninsular War. After having, as we do, garnished their front with skirmishers, they post their principal forces in such a way as to keep them out of sight, holding them all the time sufficiently near to the key of the position to be able to attack the enemy at once if they come near to reaching it; and this attack, made unexpectedly upon assailants who have lost heavily and think the victory already theirs, succeeds almost invariably. We had a melancholy experience of this at Busaco. In spite of the numerous obstacles which favoured the defence, the brave men of the 2nd corps had just succeeded, after an hour of desperate work, performed with really heroic courage, in scaling the mountain, when, as they arrived panting at the summit of the ridge, they found themselves in front of a hitherto unperceived line of English infantry. After receiving them at fifteen paces with an admirably aimed and sustained fire which stretched more than five hundred men on the ground, this line dashed at the survivors with the bayonet. The unexpected attack, accompanied by a storm of grape on their flank, shook some of our battalions; but they quickly rallied, and, in spite of their heavy losses, our troops, astonished but not disconcerted, charged the English line, broke it at several points, and carried six guns. But Wellington had brought up strong reserves, while ours were at the foot of the mountain, and the French, pressed on all sides, and compelled to give up the narrow ground which they occupied on the plateau, found themselves, after a long and brisk resistance, driven in a heap down the steep descent up which they had climbed. The English lines followed them half-way down, firing volleys to which our men could not reply—and murderous they were. All resistance being useless in so unfavourable a position, the officers ordered the men to take skirmishing order about the broken ground, and under a hail of bullets they reached the foot of the mountain. At this point we lost General Graindorge, two colonels, eighty officers, and seven or eight hundred men.

After such a check prudence would have forbidden to send any troops weakened by heavy losses a second time against a

triumphant enemy with his position unaltered; yet General Reynier ordered Foy's and Sarrut's brigades to return to the charge; and Masséna, who witnessed this madness, allowed the second attack. It met with the same fate as the first. While this was taking place on our left, fortune was not more favourable to the 6th corps on our right. Although it had been arranged to attack simultaneously at all points, and Masséna had repeated the order about seven o'clock at the moment of engaging, it was half-past eight before Ney set his troops in motion. He asserted afterwards that he had been delayed by the difficulty of the position on that side, and it certainly was greater than on the left. Our people had just made one great mistake in sending the 2nd corps into action before the 6th was ready; Ney made one similar when he engaged Loison's, Marchand's, and Mermet's divisions without any cohesion. The troops attacked vigorously, and although entire files were swept away by cannon and musketry, the brigades of Ferey and Simon, with the 26th of the line, clambering up the steep rocks, flung themselves on the enemy's guns and captured three of them. The English, being reinforced, returned to the attack; General Simon, with his jaw smashed, fell, and was taken prisoner on one of the guns which he had just captured. Almost every field officer was killed or wounded, and three volleys at close quarters completed the rout of the French masses, who returned in disorder to their starting-point. Thus ended the principal fight. The losses of the 2nd and 6th corps were immense. They amounted to more than 5,000 men, including 250 officers killed, wounded, or prisoners. General Graindorge, Colonels Monier, Amy, and Berliet killed; two others wounded; General Simon wounded and taken prisoner; Generals Merle, Mancune, and Foy severely wounded, besides two colonels and thirteen majors. The enemy in their sheltered position lost far less heavily, but they admitted 2,300 men disabled. We learnt afterwards that if we had attacked the day before the English would have withdrawn without fighting, because 2,500 of their best troops were then on the other side of the Mondego, and only arrived at Busaco the night before the battle. Such was the result of the six days lost by Masséna at Viseu, and his hurry to return on the 26th to Mortagoa instead of reconnoitring the position.

Our efforts having thus utterly failed in face of a hillside so steep that an unburdened man would have climbed it with difficulty, it surely behoved our leaders to put a stop to firing which had now become useless. Yet a brisk file-firing went on

all along the lines at the foot of the position, which our soldiers, in their excitement, were to assault anew. These small encounters with an enemy hidden by lofty rocks were very costly to us, and there was a general feeling that they should cease, though no one gave the formal order. Just then the two armies witnessed a touching incident, forming a contrast to the scenes of slaughter all round. General Simon's valet, hearing that his master had been left badly wounded on the summit of the Alcoba, tried to make his way to him; but the enemy, not understanding his motive for approaching their lines, fired on him repeatedly, and the faithful servant was compelled to return to the French outposts. As he was lamenting his inability to aid his master, the *cantinière* of the 26th, belonging to the brigade, took the things from the valet's hands, loaded them on her donkey, and went forward, saying, 'We will see if the English will kill a woman'; listening to no objections, she went up the hill, and passed coolly between the lines of skirmishers, who, savage as they were, ceased firing till she was out of range. Presently she saw the English colonel and explained what she had brought. He received her kindly, and had her taken to General Simon, with whom she stayed several days, tending him to the best of her power, and only leaving him when the valet arrived. Then, getting on her donkey, she went through the enemy's army, by that time in retreat on Lisbon, and rejoined her regiment, without having received an insult of any kind, though she was young and very pretty. On the contrary, the English made a point of treating her with great respect.[1]

The two armies maintained their respective positions; it was a sad night for us; the future appeared gloomy enough. At daybreak on the 28th, the Alcoba echoed with mighty cheering and the strains of the English military bands. Wellington was reviewing his troops, who were saluting him with their hurrahs; while the French at the foot of the mountain were in gloomy silence. Masséna should have mounted his horse then, reviewed his army, harangued his soldiers, until they replied by their cheers to the defiant enthusiasm of the enemy. The Emperor and Marshal Lannes would certainly have acted thus. But Masséna held aloof, walking about all alone, and making no arrangements; while his lieutenants, especially Ney and

[1] [Napier also tells a story of a girl who passed unmolested through the armies; but in this case it was a Portuguese girl who actually crossed the battlefield, in the opposite direction, down, and not up, the mountain.]

Reynier, the very men who the day before had urged him to engage, saying that they would answer for victory, were loudly accusing him of imprudence in attacking a strong position like Busaco. When, finally, they joined the commander-in-chief, it was to propose that he should advertise our failure to the army and all the world by abandoning Portugal and take the army back into Spain. Then old Masséna, recovering a little of the energy of Rivoli, Zurich, and Genoa, and many another memorable occasion, rejected their proposal as unworthy of the army and of himself.

The English have called the affair of Busaco a political battle, because the British Parliament, alarmed at the enormous cost of the war, appeared resolved to withdraw the troops from the Peninsula and content itself in future with supplying arms and ammunition to the guerillas. As this plan tended to destroy Wellington's influence, he had resolved to prevent it from being carried out by replying with a victory to the fears of the English Parliament, and this determined him to await the French at Busaco. His plan succeeded, and Parliament voted further supplies for the war which was to be so disastrous to us.

While the marshal was discussing with his lieutenants, General Sainte-Croix came up. On seeing him everyone expressed regret that he had not been present the day before to act as the marshal's good genius. Masséna now understood the mistake he had made in not turning the enemy's left as we had advised him, and, on hearing the state of things from Masséna himself, Sainte-Croix advised him to revert to that plan. With the general's assent, he galloped off, accompanied by Ligniville and me, to Mortagoa, whither he sent for his brigade of dragoons. As we passed through the village we picked up the convent gardener, who, at sight of a piece of gold, consented to act as our guide, laughing when he was asked if there really existed a road to Boialva.

While Sainte-Croix's brigade, and a regiment of infantry, led the way in this new direction, the 8th corps and Montbrun's cavalry followed close behind, and the rest of the army prepared to do the same. Urged by Sainte-Croix, Masséna had at last spoken with authority, and imposed silence on his lieutenants when they persisted in denying the existence of a pass on the right.

In order to conceal from the English the movement of such of our troops as were at the foot of the Alcoba, they did not march until night, and then in dead silence. But information was soon given by the despairing cries of the French wounded,

whom we were under the sad necessity of abandoning. A great number of horses, and all the beasts of burden, were employed to carry the men whom there was hope of curing; but those who had lost their legs, or were otherwise severely wounded, were left lying on the dry heath, and as the poor fellows expected to have their throats cut by the peasants as soon as the armies were out of the way, their despair was terrible.

The French army had reason to fear that Wellington, seeing them execute a flank march so near him, would attack them vigorously. This might have led to the capture of Reynier's entire corps, which would be the last to leave its position, and would remain for some hours unsupported in presence of the enemy. But the English general had no time to think of turning the French rear-guard, for he had just learnt that he was being himself turned by the pass of which the French commander-in-chief had so long denied the existence. What actually happened was this. After we had marched all the night of the 28th, the gardener, going with the head of Sainte-Croix's column, brought us by a road practicable for artillery as far as Boialva, that is to say, to the extreme left flank of the English army, so that all the positions on the Alcoba had been outflanked without a blow, and Wellington, under pain of exposing his army to be taken in rear, had to abandon Busaco in haste, to regain Coimbra, and cross the Mondego there, with a view of retreating upon Lisbon, which he did with all speed. Our advanced guard only met with a small detachment of Hanoverian hussars posted at Boialva, a pretty village situated at the southern issue from the mountains. The fertility of the country gave hopes that the army might find abundant subsistence there. A shout of joy went up from our ranks, and the soldiers very soon forgot the fatigues and dangers of the previous days, perhaps also the unhappy comrades whom they had left dying before Busaco.

To complete the success of our movement, a good road joined Boialva with the village of Avelans on the road from Oporto to Coimbra. Sainte-Croix occupied this, and by a further piece of luck we discovered a second road from Boialva to Sardao, another village on the high road. At last, then, we had the proof of the existence of this pass, so obstinately denied by Ney, Reynier, and Pelet. Masséna must have reproached himself with having omitted to reconnoitre the strong position before which he had lost several thousand men, and which his army had now turned without meeting the least resistance. But Wellington was still more to blame for not having guarded

that point, and surveyed the road leading to it from Mortagoa. It was of no use for him to say afterwards that he did not believe the road had been practicable for artillery, and that he had besides ordered Trant to cover Boialva with 2,000 militia. Such an excuse is not permissible for experienced fighting men. It might perfectly well be answered that as to the state of the road the English commander should have reconnoitred it before the battle, and that, in the second place, it is not enough for the chief of an army to give orders, but that he should make sure that they have been executed. Boialva is only a few leagues from Busaco, and yet Wellington never ascertained that this pass, so important to the safety of his army, had been guarded according to his orders; so that if Masséna had been better inspired, and had, during the night of the 26th, sent an army corps to Boialva to attack the left flank of the enemy, while threatening him in front with the rest of his force, the English would certainly have suffered a sanguinary defeat. From all this we conclude that in the circumstances neither Wellington nor Masséna showed himself equal to his high reputation; and that they deserved the blame which their contemporaries addressed to them, and which history will confirm.

CHAPTER LV.

As soon as the army was clear of the defile of Boialva, Masséna marched on Coimbra by way of Milheada and Tornos. At the latter point there was a cavalry engagement, in which Sainte-Croix overthrew the English rear-guard, forcing them back on Coimbra. On October 1 the French entered that place. Deceived by the result of the battle of Busaco, and the assertion of English officers that the French army was retiring into Spain, the unhappy inhabitants of that city had abandoned themselves to a display of rejoicing. The festivities were not at an end, when suddenly came the news that the French had turned the mountains and were marching straight on Coimbra—that indeed they were not a day's journey distant. Indescribable panic prevailed; the population of 12,000 souls simultaneously with the news of the enemy's approach received orders to leave their home forthwith. Their departure was, by the admission of English officers, a most terrible sight; I refrain from relating the heart-breaking incidents.

Wellington's army, hampered by the mass of fugitives of every age, sex, and class, men and beasts of burden in inextricable confusion, retired in the greatest disorder toward Coimbra and Pombal, many perishing in the passage of the Mondego. This was good for Masséna. He should have sent Junot's corps, which, not having fought at Busaco, was fully available, in pursuit, and by a sudden attack he might have caused heavy loss to the English army, which, by the testimony of some of our men who had been captured at Busaco and had escaped, was in disorder beyond words. But, to our great surprise, and as if he wished to allow the enemy time to restore order to get away, the commander-in-chief billeted his army in Coimbra and the adjacent villages, and waited three clear days. His excuse for this delay was the necessity of reorganising the 2nd and 6th corps which had suffered at Busaco, and of establishing hospitals at Coimbra; all which he might have done while the 8th corps was in pursuit of the enemy. But the real notion for the stay at Coimbra was, in the first place, the increasing want of confi-

dence between Masséna and his lieutenants; and, further, his difficulty in deciding whether to leave a division in the place to cover his rear and protect the sick and wounded, or to take all his available forces for the battle which was expected to be fought outside Lisbon. Either course had its advantages and disadvantages; but he need not have taken three days to make up his mind. Finally he decided to leave a half-company to guard the convent of Santa Clara and protect the wounded who were assembled there from the first fury of an attacking force, with orders to capitulate as soon as an officer appeared.

But no definite instructions were given; and, under the impression that a division would remain, the colonels put all their infirm men, most of whom could perfectly well have marched, and desired nothing better, in the vast convent. More than three thousand were thus left behind, with two lieutenants and eighty men of the naval brigade as their sole guard.

I was surprised that Masséna, who was sure to require sailors when he reached the Tagus, should have sacrificed a number of these valuable men, who could not easily be replaced, when he might have left some infantry of inferior value. It was clear that in less than twenty-four hours the enemy's irregular troops would occupy the town; and indeed in the evening of the very day, October 3,[1] on which the French had left it, the Portuguese militia entered.

Our poor wounded had barricaded themselves in the convent, having no longer any doubt that Masséna had abandoned them, and were preparing to sell their lives dearly. The naval lieutenants behaved admirably. With the help of some infantry officers who were among the wounded, they collected all the men who still had muskets and could use them, and succeeded in holding the Portuguese in check all the night. On the morning of the 6th Brigadier Trant, the commander of the militia, arrived; and the naval officers capitulated to him in writing. Hardly, however, had the wounded French surrendered the few arms which they had than the militia fell on the poor wretches, many of whom could not stand, and butchered over a thousand. The rest, sent without mercy to Oporto, perished on the road; as soon as anyone fell out from fatigue the Portuguese killed him. Yet this militia was organised and led by English officers, commanded by an English general; and in not checking these atrocities Trant dishonoured his country and his uniform. In vain does Napier allege in his excuse that only ten French

[1] [The statement on the last page that Masséna stayed *three* days seems incorrect.]

prisoners were sacrificed; the fact is, that nearly all were murdered either in the hospital at Coimbra or on the road. Even in England the name of Trant has become infamous.[1]

From Coimbra Masséna had written to the Emperor; but the difficulty was to transmit the despatch through the insurgent population. A Frenchman would have failed, and it was necessary to find someone who knew the country and could speak the language. A Portuguese officer named Mascarenhas, who had entered the French service with General d'Alorna, offered to be the bearer. I saw him start disguised as a mountain-shepherd, with a little dog in his basket, in which costume he hoped to reach Almeida, where the French commandant would put him in the way of proceeding to Paris. But it was of no use for Mascarenhas, who belonged to the first nobility of Portugal, to attempt to conceal his distinguished bearing and manner and his refined speech. The peasants were not taken in; he was arrested, brought to Lisbon, and condemned to death; in spite of his appeal for the noble's privilege of decapitation, he was hanged as a spy in the public square.

The three further days wasted by the French at Coimbra allowed the English to get away, and it took us three days more to come up with their rear-guard at Pombal. Before our coming the body of the celebrated marquis of that name had lain in a magnificent tomb, erected in an immense mausoleum of wonderful architecture. This had been wrecked by the stragglers from the English army. They had broken the tomb and thrown the bones under the feet of their horses, which they had stabled in the vast building. A strange instance of the vanity of human things! There, lying in the filth, when Masséna and his staff visited the place, were the scanty remains of the great minister who put down the Jesuits!

From Pombal we went on to Leyria, and at 9 A.M. our advance-guard was on the banks of the Tagus, at Santarem. There we found immense stores of provisions; but this advantage was almost neutralised by autumnal rains such as are not seen out of the tropics except on the southern shores of the Peninsula, and which assailed us after unbroken fine weather. Both armies suffered much from this cause; but ours reached Alemquer, a market town at the foot of the hills of Cintra,

[1] [General Marbot's study of Napier does not appear to have extended to the Appendix, or he would have found a letter written to Trant by three French officers, a doctor, a colonel, and a naval commander, thanking him, in the name of the prisoners, for 'the trouble which he had taken to alleviate their condition.']

which gird Lisbon at a few leagues' distance. We quite expected to have to fight a battle before entering Lisbon, but, as we knew that the town was open on the land-side, we had no doubt of success. Meantime, however, all the neighbourhood of Lisbon had been covered with fortifications. For a year and a half the English had been working at them ; but neither Ney, who had just spent a year at Salamanca, nor Masséna, who for six months had been making ready to invade Portugal, had the least inkling of these gigantic works. Reynier and Junot were equally ignorant; most surprising of all—incredible, indeed, if the fact were not absolutely certain—the French Government itself did not know that the hills of Cintra had been fortified. It is inconceivable how the Emperor, who had agents in every country, could have omitted to send some to Lisbon. At that time thousands of American, German, Swedish, and English ships were daily bringing into the Tagus stores for Wellington's army; and it would have been perfectly easy to have introduced some spies among the numerous sailors and clerks employed on these vessels. Knowledge of all kinds can be obtained by money; it was by this means that the Emperor kept himself informed of all that went on in England and among the great Powers of Europe. Nevertheless, he never gave Masséna any information as to the defences of Lisbon ; and it was only on reaching Alemquer that the French general discovered that the hills were fortified and connected by lines of which the right touched the sea in rear of Torres Vedras, the centre was at Sobral, and the right rested on the Tagus, near Alhandra.

The day before our troops appeared at this point the English army had entered the lines, driving before it the population of the surrounding districts, to the number of 300,000 souls. Utter disorder prevailed; and those among the French officers who guessed what was taking place among the enemy regretted afresh and very keenly that Masséna had resolved a fortnight before to attack the position of Busaco in front. If that position had been turned, the enemy would have been taken in flank and have retired upon Lisbon, and our army, in full strength and ardour, would have attacked the lines on its arrival, and certainly have carried them. With the capture of the capital the English must have retreated precipitately, and the reverse would have been irreparable. But our heavy losses at Busaco had chilled the ardour of Masséna's lieutenants, and bred ill-will between them and him; so that now all were trying to paralyse his operations, and representing every little hillock to be a new height of Busaco the capture of which would cost copious blood-

shed. In spite, however, of this want of loyalty, Masséna despatched the 8th corps towards the enemy's centre, and Clausel's division carried the village of Sobral—a very important point for us. Just when a simultaneous attack along the whole line was expected, General Sainte-Croix, who had urged this course, was killed by a cannon-shot in front of Villa-Franca. That excellent officer was with General Montbrun making a reconnoissance toward Alhandra, and as they passed along the Tagus, on which several Portuguese sloops were cruising, and firing on our outposts, poor Sainte-Croix was cut in two by a chain-shot. It was a grievous loss for the army, for Masséna, and above all for me, who loved him like a brother.

After the death of the only man capable of giving him good advice the commander-in-chief fell back into his state of perpetual indecision, wavering under the clamour of his lieutenants, who, in their present faint-heartedness, represented all the hills of Cintra as bristling with cannon ready to make mince-meat of us. In order to know what he was really to think about it, Masséna, who, since the advice which Ligniville and I had offered at the battle of Busaco, had evinced some kindness towards us, directed us to examine the front of the enemy's lines. They were undoubtedly of imposing strength, but very far from what people were pleased to say. The English entrenchments formed an immense arc round Lisbon, at least twenty French leagues in length. Every officer of the least experience knows well that a position of this extent cannot present the same difficulties everywhere and must have its weak spots. We became aware of several such by seeing officers, and even cavalry pickets, ride up quite easily; and we also became convinced that our engineer officers who had mapped the hills had figured an armed redoubt wherever they saw a little earth recently disturbed. The English, to lead us into a mistake, had on every small elevation traced works of which most had not yet got beyond the stage of planning. But even if they had been completed it seemed to us that the ground was sufficiently irregular to conceal the movements of a portion of our army, and that by employing one corps to make a feint on the front while the other two pushed real attacks on the weakest points of this long line, they would find the English troops too widely scattered, or at any rate with their reserves at a considerable distance from the points attacked.

The age of Louis XIV. was a period when great use was made of lines, and history shows that the greater part of those which were attacked were carried for want of the power of

mutual support among the defenders. We thought that at some point of their vast extent it would be easy to pierce the English lines, and an opening once made, the enemy's troops, who would be in some cases a day's journey from the opening, would recognise that they had not time to come up, except in very inferior strength, and would retire, not to Lisbon, whence vessels cannot get out in all winds, but to Cascaes, where their military fleet and transports were assembled. Their retreat would have been very difficult, and might perhaps have become a rout. In any case their embarkation in presence of our army would have been a second edition of Sir John Moore's at Corunna. We have since seen English officers, among others General Hill, admit that if the French had attacked within the first ten days after their arrival they would have easily penetrated together with the confused multitude of peasants in the midst of whom the English armies could never have disentangled themselves nor made any regular dispositions for defence.

When my comrade and I reported in this sense to Masséna, the old soldier's eyes sparkled with martial ardour, and he at once issued marching orders to prepare for the attack which he reckoned on making the next day. However, on receiving the orders, his four lieutenants hastened to his quarters and a stormy discussion took place. Junot, who had commanded in Lisbon, and knew it well, declared that it seemed impossible to him to maintain so large a town, and expressed himself strongly for the attack. General Montbrun shared his opinion; but Ney and Reynier hotly opposed it, adding that the loss at Busaco, together with that of the wounded who had been abandoned at Coimbra, and the numerous sick who had been for the moment disabled by the rains, had so largely diminished the number of combatants, that it was not possible to attack a strong position, and further, that their men were demoralised—an inaccurate statement, for the troops were showing great ardour in demanding to march upon Lisbon. Losing his patience, Masséna repeated *vivâ voce* the orders he had already given in writing, and Ney declared in so many words that he would not carry them out. The commander-in-chief was minded then to remove Ney from the command of the 6th corps, as some months later he was obliged to do. But he considered that Ney was beloved by his men, whom he had commanded for seven years; that his removal would involve that of Reynier, which would complete the discord in the army at a moment when unanimity was so eminently needed. The energetic advice of Sainte-Croix was no longer at hand to sustain him, and Masséna

quailed before the disobedience of his two chief lieutenants. They could not indeed decide him to leave Portugal, but they extorted from him a promise to move away from the enemy's lines, and to retire ten leagues back behind Santarem and Rio Mayor and there await fresh orders from the Emperor. I saw with regret this little retreat, which seemed to me to augur one more general and definitive, nor, as you will soon see, did my presentiment deceive me. I turned my back therefore with sorrow on the hills of Cintra, fully persuaded that if we had profited by the confusion into which the fugitives had thrown the English camp we might have forced the unfinished lines. But what was then easy was no longer so a fortnight later. Compelled to feed the vast population, which at his bidding had streamed in upon Lisbon, Wellington used the arms of 40,000 stout peasants by making them work at the completion of the fortifications with which he proposed to cover Lisbon, and thus the place became of immense strength.

CHAPTER LVI.

During our stay at Sobral I saw another artifice employed by the English, and one of sufficient importance to be worth noting. It is often said that thoroughbred horses are of no use in war, because their price is so high and they require so much care that it would be almost impossible to provide a squadron, much more a regiment, with them. Nor indeed do the English use them on campaign; but they have a habit of sending single officers, mounted on fast thoroughbreds, to watch the movements of a hostile army. These officers get within the enemy's cantonments, cross his line of march, keep for days on the flanks of his columns, always just out of range, till they can form a clear idea of his number and the direction of his march. After our entry into Portugal, we frequently saw observers of this kind flitting round us. It was vain to give chase to them, even with the best-mounted horsemen. The moment the English officer saw any such approach he would set spurs to his steed, and nimbly clearing ditches, hedges, and even brooks, he would make off at such speed that our men soon lost sight of him, and perhaps saw him soon after a league farther on, note-book in hand, at the top of some hillock, continuing his observations. This practice, which I never saw anyone employ like the English, and which I tried to imitate during the Russian campaign, might perhaps have saved Napoleon at Waterloo by affording him a warning of the arrival of the Prussians. Anyhow, these English 'runners,' who were the despair of the French general from the moment we left Spain, increased in boldness and cunning as soon as we were in front of Sobral. One could see them come out of the lines and race with the speed of stags through the vines and over the rocks to inspect the positions occupied by our troops.

One day, however, when there had been a little skirmish of outposts, in which we had remained in possession of the ground, a light-infantryman, who had for some time had his eye on the best mounted and boldest of the enemy's 'runners,' and knew his ways, shammed dead, quite sure that as soon as his company was out of the way the Englishman would come back to look at the

little battlefield. He did come, and was unpleasantly surprised to see the supposed dead man jump up, kill his horse with a musket-shot, then charge him with the bayonet, summoning him to surrender, which he had no choice but to do. The prisoner, on being presented to Masséna by his captor, turned out to be a member of the highest English nobility, a Percy, descended from one of the most illustrious Norman chiefs, to whom William the Conqueror gave the Duchy of Northumberland, which his offspring still hold. Mr. Percy was honourably received by the French commander and taken to Sobral. Being curious to mount the clock tower, in order to observe how our army was posted, he was allowed to do so; and from this lofty point, telescope in hand, he witnessed an amusing sight, at which, in spite of his own bad luck, he could not help laughing: the capture of another English officer. This gentleman, having returned from India after twenty years' absence, and hearing in London that his brother was serving in Portugal, had sailed for Lisbon, and hurried up on foot to the front to greet his brother, whose regiment was on duty. It was a lovely day, and the new comer diverted himself by admiring the beautiful country and studying the fortifications and the troops which occupied them. So intent was he on this that he walked past the outposts without knowing it, and was between the two armies. Just then he caught sight of some fine figs, and not having tasted European fruit for a long time, took a fancy to climb the tree. While he was quietly regaling himself, the soldiers of a neighbouring French picket, surprised to see a red coat among the branches, came up, and seeing what it was, captured the English officer, amid the laughter of all those who witnessed the incident from afar. This Englishman, however, better advised than Mr. Percy, begged his captors to keep him on the outskirts of the French army, hoping that if he saw nothing of its internal arrangements, he might be exchanged. His foresight proved successful; for Masséna, having no fear of his being able to give any information as to the disposition of our troops, sent him back on parole, begging Lord Wellington to exchange against him Captain Letermillier, who had been taken at Coimbra, and afterwards became one of our best colonels. Mr. Percy, who had laughed much at his comrade, on learning that he had been exchanged, requested the same favour; but this was refused, as he had seen too much, and might report it. The unlucky young man followed the French army as a prisoner, and shared its sufferings for six months. On our return to Spain he was transferred to France, where he passed several years.

Unable to obtain any backing from his lieutenants in his proposed attack on the lines, and being short of provisions, Masséna was compelled, on November 14, to retire ten leagues back from the hills and establish his army in a corn-growing district, where positions could be found suitable for defence. He selected the country between the Rio Mayor, the Tagus, and the Zezere, establishing the 2nd corps at Santarem, the 8th at Torres Novas (where also he fixed his head-quarters), the 6th at Thomar, the artillery park at Tancos, while the cavalry were at Ourem with their outposts pushed as far as Leiria. Inferring from this movement that the French were in full retreat for Spain, the English followed, but cautiously and at a distance, fearing a trick to draw them out of their lines. When they found that we were halted behind the Rio Mayor they gave us some trouble, but were vigorously met; and judging that want of provisions would soon drive us to leave this district, well adapted for the defensive, they contented themselves with watching us. Lord Wellington's head-quarters were fixed at Cartaxo, opposite Santarem, and from November 1810 till March 1811 the armies faced each other, separated only by the Rio Mayor. The English, having their food supplies brought by the Tagus from Lisbon, lived in comfort; but the provisioning of our army, having no stores, and being in a contracted space, was a serious problem. Our troops, however, worked with admirable patience and industry, each contributing, like bees in a hive, his share to the common welfare. Workshops were started in every battalion; and each regiment, organising a system of raids on a large scale, sent out detachments, armed and well led, who returned driving thousands of donkeys laden with provisions of all kinds, and immense herds of sheep, pigs, and goats, the booty being proportionately divided on its arrival. As the nearer districts became exhausted, the raids had to be pushed further afield, even to the gates of Abrantes and Coimbra; and the attacks of the infuriated peasantry, though always beaten off, caused some loss. Besides these, the foraging parties had a new form of enemy to contend with, resembling in its organisation the robber bands of the middle ages.

A French sergeant, wearied of the misery in which the army was living, resolved to decamp and live in comfort. To this end he persuaded about a hundred of the worst characters in the army, and going with them to the rear, took up his quarters in a vast convent deserted by the monks, but still full of furniture and provisions. He increased his store largely by

carrying off everything in the neighbourhood that suited him; well-furnished spits and stewpans were always at the fire, and each man helped himself as he would; and the leader received the expressive if contemptuous name of 'Marshal Stockpot.' The scoundrel had also carried off numbers of women; and being joined before long by the scum of the three armies, attracted by the prospect of unrestrained debauchery, he formed a band of some three hundred English, French, and Portuguese deserters, who lived as a happy family in one unbroken orgy. This brigandage had been going on for some months, when one day, a foraging detachment having gone off in pursuit of a flock as far as the convent which sheltered the so-called 'Marshal Stockpot,' our soldiers were much surprised to see him coming to meet them at the head of his bandits, with orders to respect his grounds and restore the flock which they had just taken there. On the refusal of our officers to comply with this demand, he ordered his men to fire on the detachment. The greater part of the French deserters did not venture to fire on their compatriots and former comrades, but the English and Portuguese obeyed, and our people had several men killed or wounded. Not being in sufficient numbers to resist, they were compelled to retreat, accompanied by all the French deserters, who came back with them to offer their submission. Masséna pardoned them on condition that they should march at the head of the three battalions who were told off to attack the convent. That den having been carried after a brief resistance, Masséna had 'Marshal Stockpot' shot, as well as the few French who had remained with him. A good many English and Portuguese shared their fate, the rest were sent off to Wellington, who did prompt justice on them.

Early in November, Masséna had sent General Foy to report his position to the Emperor: three battalions being required to escort him in safety to the Spanish frontier. Meanwhile, not knowing when the expected reinforcements might arrive, he feared that the English army might cross the Rio Mayor, and make an unexpected attack on our divisions at a time when every regiment had detached at least a third of its men to search for provisions. If the enemy had arrived in the middle of our cantonments while so many soldiers were away, a catastrophe would certainly have followed; and the dispersed troops would have been liable to be beaten in detail before they could reassemble. Luckily for us, however, Lord Wellington based all his plans on lapse of time, and did not venture upon any enterprise.

Meanwhile the Emperor, whose only news of Masséna's army had so far been obtained from the London newspapers, having at length received the despatches brought by General Foy, ordered the Count of Erlon, commanding the 9th corps, cantoned near Salamanca, to march upon Portugal, and to send Gardanne's brigade forward at once with instructions to find the French army, and take it the ammunition and the draught horses of which it presumably stood in need. With all the Emperor's perspicacity it was impossible for him at Paris to judge of the numerous difficulties which would hamper Gardanne in carrying out his orders. Napoleon could never believe that the flight of Portuguese occupants at the approach of a French corps had been so universal that it was impossible to come across an inhabitant from whom one could receive the slightest information. This, however, was what befel Gardanne. A former page of Louis XVI., whom the Emperor had made governor to his pages, he was lacking in initiative, and only did well under the direction of an able general. Now he completely lost his bearings. Not knowing where to find Masséna's army, he wandered in all directions, and when he at length reached Cardigos, a day's march, as his maps showed, from the *Zezere*, he did not realise that in war a flying column in search of a friendly force should always steer itself by rivers, forests, large towns, and mountain chains, for if the troops whom he has to reach are anywhere near, they will certainly have pickets at these important points. It is hard to understand why Gardanne forgot this rule of the craft, but he actually lost a good many men by a precipitate retreat without having seen the enemy. If he had but pushed on three leagues to the *Zezere* he would have seen our outposts, as it was he returned to Spain taking back reinforcements, ammunition, and horses.

Masséna began to fear lest provisions might run short on the right bank of the Tagus, and resolved to tap a new country by throwing a portion of his army across the river, into the fertile province of Alemtejo. To this end he ordered a division to cross the *Zezere* and occupy Punhete, a small town at the point where that river flows into the Tagus. This seemed a good point to establish a bridge, but materials were lacking. Everything was, however, supplied by the zeal and activity of General Eblé, well supported by his subordinate artillery officers. Forges and saw-mills were built; tools, planks, beams, anchors and ropes manufactured, numerous boats were constructed, and the work progressing as it were by magic, we conceived the hope of being able to cast a solid bridge over the

Tagus. Lord Wellington prepared to oppose the crossing of the river, bringing troops up from Lisbon to form a camp on the left bank opposite Punhete: whence we augured that before we could establish ourselves on the further side of the great river we should have to sustain a hot engagement. All this while the French army was occupying the positions which it had taken up in November. Several English divisions were encamped on the right bank of the Rio Mayor, Lord Wellington's head-quarters being at Cartaxo. There died the celebrated General La Romana.

The weather was fearful; the roads had become torrents, and the difficulty of seeking provisions, and especially forage, was much increased. Yet our French gaiety did not desert us. In every camp societies were got up for theatricals, and the houses deserted by the inhabitants supplied us with plenty of costumes in the wardrobes which the Portuguese ladies had left behind. We found also plenty of French books; our quarters were comfortable, and we continued to pass the winter pretty well. Our reflections were, however, often sad, both as to the situation of the army, and our own position. For three months we had had no news from our families, from France, even from Spain. Would the Emperor send us reinforcements sufficient to take Lisbon, or should we be compelled to retreat before the English? Our minds were full of these thoughts, when on December 27 it was suddenly reported that General Drouet, Count of Erlon, had just joined the army with the 9th corps, 25,000 to 30,000 strong. But our satisfaction was much reduced on finding that the Count of Erlon's army had never contained more than 12,000 men: half of whom he had left on the Spanish frontier under General Claparède, bringing with him only Cornoux's division, 6,000 strong, a reinforcement quite inadequate to meet the English and take Lisbon. Instead of going at once to the commander-in-chief at Torres Novas, the Count of Erlon stopped ten leagues short of it at Thomar, Ney's head-quarters. This was a great blow to Masséna, and he sent me to the commander of the 9th corps to ask for an explanation of a course as much opposed to politeness as to military regulations. When he gave me this commission he had no doubt that the Count of Erlon had been placed by the Emperor under his orders, but there he was wrong. The instructions given by the chief of the staff to the commander of the 9th corps were only to enter Portugal, find Masséna's army, hand over to him some hundreds of draught horses with ammunition, and then to return to Spain with his troops. It is hard to understand how, after the reports which the Emperor had received

from Foy and Casabianca as to the bad plight of the army, he could have limited himself to sending such weak support.

I found that the Count of Erlon had been lodging with Ney twenty-four hours. The marshal, who was anxious to get away from Portugal, had detained his guest in order that the influence of the commander-in-chief might not induce him to put their 6,000 men at his disposal, and thus enable him to resist the proposal to retreat. The count was therefore making ready to depart next day, without visiting Masséna; to whom he begged me to make his excuses on the plea that important business called him back to the frontier.

An aide-de-camp's duties are pretty difficult, since in performing them he often has to convey instructions to his superiors which may wound their self-esteem. Sometimes in the interests of the service he has on his own responsibility to act as interpreter of his general's wishes by giving in his name orders which he has not dictated. This is a serious—even a dangerous matter; but the tact of the aide-de-camp must enable him to judge of the circumstances. My position was as delicate as it well could be, for Masséna, not having foreseen that the commander of the 9th corps might wish to leave Portugal, had put nothing in writing on the subject. Still, if he did take away his troops the operations of the army would be paralysed, and the commander-in-chief would blame the caution which had made me shrink from speaking in his name. I took, therefore, a bold resolve; and although I had never met the Count of Erlon (Ney being present the while, and strongly opposing my arguments), I took the liberty of saying that at least he ought to give Marshal Masséna time to consider the orders which he had brought from the chief of the staff, as well as time to reply to them. Finally, when the count had repeated that he could not wait, I struck my great stroke by saying: 'Since your Excellency forces me to fulfil my errand to the last word, I have to inform you that Marshal Masséna, commander-in-chief of the French forces in Portugal, has directed me to convey to you both in his own name and that of the Emperor, a formal order not to move your troops, but to report yourself to him to-day at Torres Novas.' The count made no reply but ordered his horses. While they were being got ready, I wrote to Masséna telling him what I had been obliged to do in his name; and I learnt later on that he approved. (A passage relating to my mission to the Count of Erlon may be found at p. 286 of the eighth volume of General Koch's 'Memoirs of Masséna';

but the scene I have mentioned is not fully reported.) The Count of Erlon was a gentle and reasonable man. As soon as he had left Ney's camp he admitted that it would not have been proper for him to leave the Army of Portugal without calling on the commander-in-chief; and all the way from Thomar to Torres Novas he treated me with much kindness, in spite of the vigour with which I had thought myself bound to appeal to him. No doubt his interview with Masséna finally convinced him, for he agreed to remain in Portugal and his troops were sent into quarters at Leyria. Masséna's gratitude for the firmness and readiness which I had shown was increased a few days later when he learnt that Lord Wellington had formed a plan of attacking our camp, and had been checked by the arrival of the Count of Erlon; while, if the reinforcement had been withdrawn, the English would have marched on us, and profited by our extended line to crush us with superior numbers.

CHAPTER LVII.

We began the year 1811 at Torres Novas, and its early days were marked by an event which saddened all the staff, the death of our comrade D'Aguesseau. This excellent young man, the heir of an illustrious name and possessor of a large fortune, had been drawn by the desire of acquiring fame into the career of arms which might have been supposed to be closed to him by his delicate health. He had borne the fatigues of the Austrian campaign pretty well, but those which we had to undergo in Portugal were beyond his powers, and he died in the prime of life. We erected a monument to him in the principal church of Torres Novas.

Colonel Casabianca, whom Masséna had sent with despatches to the Emperor, had returned with the Count of Erlon, bringing information that Marshal Soult, who was in command of a powerful army in Andalusia, had received orders to enter Portugal and join the commander-in-chief.

Disquieted by our preparations, and wishing to know in what condition our works were, Wellington employed a strong measure which he had often found successful. One very dark night an Englishman, dressed in officer's uniform, got into a small boat on the left bank a little above Punhete, landed in silence, passed through the French outposts, and at daybreak walked boldly towards our workshops, examining everything at his ease as if he had belonged to the staff of our army. Our artillerymen and engineers coming to their work in the morning perceived the stranger, arrested him, and brought him to General Eblé, to whom this scoundrel impudently declared that he was an English officer, and that, in disgust at a piece of favouritism which had been committed to his injury, he had deserted in order to take service in our Irish legion. On being taken before the commander-in-chief he not only repeated his story, but offered to give detailed information as to the positions of the English troops, and point out the places where we might with most advantage cross the Tagus. You will hardly believe that Masséna and Pelet, much as they despised

the fellow, put faith in his tale, and wishing to profit by his advice, spent whole days over the maps with him, taking notes of what he said. We of the staff were not so much taken in, for nothing could persuade us that an English officer would have deserted, and we declared plainly that in our opinion the pretended captain was nothing but a clever spy sent by Wellington; but nothing that we could say shook Masséna's and Pelet's belief. Yet our conjectures were well founded, as it was soon proved, when General Junot came to head-quarters, and his aide-de-camp recognised the so-called English officer as having acted the deserter once before in 1808, when the French army was occupying Lisbon. Junot also remembered him perfectly, although he was now wearing an infantry uniform instead of the hussar uniform which he wore at Lisbon, and advised Masséna to shoot him. But the stranger protested that he had never served in the cavalry, and to prove his identity showed a captain's commission with which Wellington had probably supplied him in order to enable him to pass for what he professed to be. Masséna therefore did not like to order his arrest, but his suspicions were aroused, and he ordered the commanding gendarme to have him closely watched. The spy got an inkling of this, and the following night got down very cleverly from a third-floor window and reached the neighbourhood of Tancos, whence he probably swam across the Tagus, for some of his clothes were found on the bank. Thus it was clearly shown that he was an agent of the English general, and that Masséna had been tricked. His wrath fell upon Pelet, and rose to fury when he discovered that the sham deserter, who had been so imprudently admitted into his study, had walked off with a small note-book in which the effective strength of each regiment was entered. Later on we learnt that this clever scamp was no officer in the English army, but a captain of Dover smugglers, who, to abundant resource and audacity, added the power of speaking several languages and of wearing every kind of disguise.

Meanwhile time passed and brought no change in our position, for although the Emperor had thrice bidden him to reinforce Masséna, Soult, imitating the attitude of Marshal Victor towards himself in 1809, had stopped on the way about the end of January to besiege Badajos. We could hear the firing distinctly, and Masséna regretted much that his colleague should be wasting precious time on a siege instead of marching towards him just when we were about to be compelled by scarcity of provisions to abandon Portugal. Even after the capture of

Badajos, the Emperor blamed Marshal Soult's disobedience and said, 'He captured me a town, and lost me a kingdom.'

On February 5 Foy rejoined the army, bringing up a reinforcement of 2,000 men. He came from Paris, where he had held long conferences with the Emperor, and announced afresh that Soult was soon coming to join us. But as the whole of February went by and he did not appear, the Count of Erlon, whom by an inexplicable blunder the Emperor had not placed under Masséna's orders, declared that his troops could not live any longer at Leyria, and that he was going to march back to Spain. Marshal Ney and General Reynier seized this opportunity to set forth again the misery of their cause in a country which was completely ruined, and the commander-in-chief was obliged at last, after several months of obstinate resistance, to consent to a retreat towards the frontier, hoping to find there the means of supporting his army without entirely abandoning Portugal, and to invade again as soon as the reinforcements arrived. Our retreat began on March 6. General Eblé had with much regret employed the previous days in destroying the barges which he had taken so much trouble to build, but in the hope that part of his preparations might one day be of use to a French army he had all the iron-work secretly buried in the presence of twelve artillery officers, and drew up a report which must be in the Ministry of War, showing the place where this precious depository is to be found. Its position will probably remain unknown for many centuries. The preparations were kept so secret and executed during the night of March 5 in such good order, that the English, whose outposts were only separated from ours by the little stream of the Rio Mayor, did not discover our movement till the morning of the next day, by which time General Reynier's troops were five leagues away. Lord Wellington, in his uncertainty whether the object of our movement was to cross the Tagus at Punhete or really to retire towards Spain, lost twelve hours in hesitation; and by the time he resolved to follow, which he did without energy and at some distance, the French army had gained a march upon him. Meanwhile, General Junot, having gone prancing imprudently in front of the English hussars, was struck on the nose by a bullet; but the wound did not hinder him from retaining the command of the 8th corps during the rest of the campaign.[1] The army

[1] [According to Napier, the date of Junot's wound was some weeks earlier, and it did disable him, though, of course, he may have retained the nominal command.]

moved in several columns on Pombal, Marshal Ney with the 6th corps forming the rear-guard, and valiantly defending his ground foot by foot. As for Masséna, roused at length from his torpor, he gained between the 5th and 9th of March three days on the enemy, and completely organised his retreat—one of the most difficult operations of war. Contrary to his usual custom, also, he was so cheerful as to surprise us all.

The French army, continuing its retreat with regularity and in compact order, was leaving Pombal when the rear-guard was briskly attacked by the advanced guard of the enemy. Marshal Ney drove them back; and in order to bar their passage completely and save our baggage wagons, he set fire to the town. The English historians[1] have cried out against this as a cruel action—as if a general's first consideration should not be the safety of his army. Pombal and its neighbourhood forming a long and narrow defile through which the enemy must pass, the best way to stop them was to burn the town. It was an extreme measure, but one which in similar cases the most civilised nations have been compelled to take, and the English themselves have often acted in the same manner.

On March 12 there was a smart engagement before Redinha. Marshal Ney, having found a defensible position, decided to halt there, and Lord Wellington, taking this as a challenge, sent forward a strong body. After a hot action Ney repulsed the enemy, and continued his retreat briskly, but with the loss of two or three hundred men. The enemy lost more than a thousand,[2] our artillery having played on his masses for some time, while he had only two light guns in position. This engagement was of as little use to the English as to us. Why should Wellington, knowing that Ney had orders to retire, and that the French were in declared retreat, be in such a hurry to attack merely in order to make Ney resume his march a little sooner than he would otherwise have done? I was present at this affair, and deplored the false pride of the two generals which cost so many brave men their lives with no result.

The main French army took up a position between Condeixa and Cardaxo. The critical moment of our retreat had arrived. Masséna, not wishing to leave Portugal, had resolved to cross

[1] [Not including Napier, apparently. In fact, in his account of the fighting at Pombal he does not mention that the place was burnt, while he excuses the burning of Redinha and other places on the ground that it served to cover Masséna's movements.]

[2] [Twelve officers and two hundred men (Napier).]

the Mondego at Coimbra, and await orders and reinforcements from the Emperor in the fertile district between that town and Oporto; but Trant had cut the bridge of Coimbra, and the Mondego was so much swollen as to be unfordable. The only course open was, therefore, to reach Puente de Murcelha, and there cross the rapid torrent of the Alva. Accordingly, on the 13th the head-quarters started in that direction. We ought to have reached Miranda de Corvo the same day; but for some unknown reason the marshal established himself at Fuente-Cuberta, where, believing himself covered by the divisions which he had ordered Ney to post at Cardaxo and Condeixa, he had with him only a guard of thirty grenadiers and twenty-five dragoons. But Ney, under plea of an attack by superior forces, had abandoned these points; giving notice to Masséna so late that he did not get the letter till some hours after the execution of the movement, and might have been captured with all his staff. In fact, believing that he was under the safeguard of several French divisions, and finding the place agreeable and the weather fine, he had ordered his dinner to be served in the open air. We were sitting quietly at table under the trees near the entrance of the village, when suddenly there appeared a detachment of fifty English hussars, less than a hundred yards away. The grenadiers surrounded Masséna, while the aides-de-camp and the dragoons mounted and rode towards the enemy. As they fled at once, we supposed they were some stragglers, seeking to rejoin their army; but we soon saw an entire regiment, and perceived that the neighbouring hillsides were covered with English troops who had almost completely surrounded Fuente-Cuberta. The imminent danger in which the head-quarters were placed was due to a mistake on the part of Ney. Thinking that the commander-in-chief had had his letter, he ordered all his divisions to evacute Cardaxo and Condeixa, thus uncovering Fuente-Cuberta. The enemy had come up in silence, and you may judge of our astonishment; but luckily night was at hand, and a thick fog rising. The English, never dreaming that the French commander would be thus separated from his army, took our group for a rear-guard, which they did not venture to attack; but it is certain that if the hussars had made a resolute charge, they would have carried off Masséna and all who were with him. Naturally when the English heard of Masséna's narrow escape they made the most of it; and Napier avers that he only escaped their hussars by taking the feathers out of his hat. Unfortunately for this story, marshals did not wear plumes.

That evening the head-quarters left Fuente-Cuberta very

quietly, though several regiments of the enemy were close by; one posted on some rising ground which our road crossed. To get it out of the way, the marshal employed an artifice of which the enemy, to whom French was familiar, often made use against us. Knowing that my brother spoke English well, he gave him instructions; and Adolphe, advancing towards the foot of the hill and keeping in the shadow, called out to the commanding officer that Lord Wellington ordered him to bear to the right, and take up a position which he indicated, in another direction than that which we were following. The colonel, unable to see my brother's uniform, took him for an English aide-de-camp, and obeyed. When he was out of the way, we passed on quickly, glad to escape a new danger, and joined the 6th corps before daylight.

During this long and toilsome march, Masséna's attention was much occupied with the danger to which Mme. N—— was exposed. Several times her horse fell over fragments of rock invisible in the darkness, but although cruelly bruised, the brave woman picked herself up. After several of these falls, however, she could neither remount her horse nor walk on foot and had to be carried by grenadiers. What would have happened to her if we had been attacked, I do not know. The marshal, imploring us all the time not to abandon her, said repeatedly: 'What a mistake I made in bringing a woman to the war!' However, we got out of the critical situation into which Ney had brought us.

On the following day, March 14, after beating back a smart attack upon his rear-guard, Masséna posted the mass of his troops in a strong position in front of Miranda de Corvo, in order to give the artillery and baggage wagons time to pass the defile beyond the town. Seeing the French army halted, Lord Wellington brought up a strong force, and everything promised a serious engagement when Masséna summoned his lieutenants to receive his instructions. All but Ney came at once, and as he did not arrive the commander-in-chief ordered Major Pelet and me to go and ask him to come quickly. This errand, which seemed an easy one to discharge, nearly cost me my life.

The French army was drawn up on ground descending gently in the form of an amphitheatre towards a large brook, lying between two broad hills, over the summits of which passed country roads, leading to Miranda. At the moment when Pelet and I galloped off to execute the marshal's order, the English skirmishers appeared in the distance, coming up to attack the two hills. In order to be more certain of finding

Marshal Ney, my companion and I separated. Pelet took the road on the left, I that on the right, passing through a wide clearing, in which were our outposts. Hearing that Marshal Ney had passed by, less than a quarter of an hour before, I felt bound to hasten to meet him, and just as I hoped to come up with him, I heard several shots, and bullets whistled past my ears. I was no great distance from the enemy's skirmishers, posted in the woods surrounding the clearing. Although I knew that Marshal Ney had a strong escort, I was uneasy on his account, fearing that the English might have cut him off, until I saw him on the other side of the brook. Pelet was with him, and both were going in the direction of Masséna. So, being sure that the orders had been conveyed, I was about to return, when a young English light infantry officer trotted up on his pony, crying, 'Stop, Mr. Frenchman; I should like to have a little fight with you!' I saw no need to reply to this bluster, and was making my way towards our outposts, 500 yards in arrear, while the Englishman followed me, heaping insults on me. At first I took no notice, but presently he called out, 'I can see by your uniform that you are on the staff of a marshal, and I will put in the London papers that the sight of me was enough to frighten away one of Masséna's or Ney's cowardly aides-de-camp!' I admit that it was a serious error on my part, but I could no longer endure this impudent challenge coolly; so, drawing my sword, I dashed furiously at my adversary. But just as I was about to meet him, I heard a rustling in the wood, and out came two English hussars, galloping to cut off my retreat. I was caught in a trap, and understood that only a most energetic defence could save me from the disgrace of being taken prisoner, through my own fault, in sight of the whole French army, which was witness to this unequal combat. So I flew upon the English officer; we met; he gave me a slash across the face, I ran my sword into his throat. His blood spurted over me, and the wretch fell from his horse to the ground, which he bit in his rage. Meanwhile, the two hussars were hitting me all over, chiefly on the head. In a few seconds my shako, my wallet, and my pelisse were in strips, though I was not myself wounded by any of their blows. At length, however, the elder of the two hussars, a grizzled old soldier, let me have more than an inch of his point in my right side. I replied with a vigorous backhander; my blade struck his teeth and passed between his jaws, as he was in the act of shouting, slitting his mouth to the ears. He made off promptly, to my lively satisfaction, for he was by far the braver and more

energetic of the two. When the younger man found himself left alone with me, he hesitated for a moment, because as our horses' heads were touching, he saw that to turn his back to me was to expose himself to be hit. However, on seeing several soldiers coming to my aid, he made up his mind, but he did not escape the dreaded wound, for in my anger I pursued him for some paces and gave him a thrust in the shoulder, which quickened his speed. During this fight, which lasted less time than it has taken to tell it, our scouts had come up quickly to set me free, and on the other side the English soldiers had marched towards the place where their officer had fallen. The two groups were firing at each other, and I was very near getting in the way of the bullets from both sides. But my brother and Ligniville, who had seen me engaged with the English officer and his two men, had hastened up to me, and I was badly in want of their help, for I was losing so much blood from the wound in my side that I was growing faint, and I could not have stayed on my horse if they had not held me up. As soon as I rejoined the staff, Masséna said, taking my hand, 'Well done; rather too well done! A field officer has no business to expose himself in fighting at the outposts.' He was quite right, but when I told him the motives which had led me on, he blamed me less, and the more fiery Ney, remembering his own hussar days, cried, 'Upon my word, in Marbot's place I should have done the same!' All the generals and my comrades came to express their concern, while Dr. Brisset was attending to me. The wound in my cheek was not important; in a month's time it had healed over, and you can scarcely see the mark of it along my left whisker. But the thrust in my right side was dangerous, especially in the middle of a long retreat, in which I was compelled to travel on horseback, without being able to get the rest which a wounded man needs. Such, my children, was the result of my fight, or, if you like, my prank at Miranda de Corvo. You have still got the shako which I wore, and the numerous notches with which the English sabres have adorned it prove that the two hussars did not let me off. I brought away my wallet also, the sling of which was cut in three places, but it has been mislaid.

As I said, at the moment when I was sent in search of Ney, the French army was drawn up in its position, commanding Miranda de Corvo, expecting an attack. However, Wellington, deterred no doubt by his losses on the previous days, checked the march of his troops, and Masséna, seeing this, determined under cover of the approaching night to pass through the town

and long defile of Miranda. I was in a painful position, having been on the march for two days and a night, and now severely wounded and weakened by loss of blood, being obliged to pass another night on horseback. The roads were fearfully crowded with baggage and artillery wagons and numerous columns of troops, against which I was always running in the pitchy darkness. To crown our disasters, we came in for a heavy storm. I was soon wet through, and sat shivering on my horse, for I knew that if I got off to warm myself, I should not have strength to mount again. Meanwhile my wound caused me acute pain; so you may judge how I suffered during this cruel night.

On the morning of the 15th the army reached the banks of the Ceira, opposite Foz de Arunce, a small town on a hill commanding the river and the level ground on the left bank. Crossing the bridge, I settled myself for a moment in a house, hoping to get a little rest; but the terrible scene which was passing before my eyes prevented this. Reynier's and Junot's corps were already in Foz de Arunce, Ney's still on the other side of the river; but the commander-in-chief, knowing that the enemy was close upon us, and not wishing his rear-guard to fight with the Ceira in its rear, ordered Ney to bring all his troops across, cut the bridge, and strongly guard the neighbouring ford, so that the men might rest undisturbed. Ney, however, supposing that the enemy, tired by the labours of the two last days, were still at a distance, and deeming it pusillanimous to abandon the left bank wholly, left on that side two divisions of infantry, Lamotte's brigade of cavalry, and several guns, and did not cut the bridge; a fresh piece of disobedience which went near to cost us dear. As it happened, while Masséna was gone off to Ponte Murcelha to superintend the restoration of another bridge which was to secure the passage of the river Alva on the next day, and Ney, full of confidence, had just given General Lamotte leave to cross the Ceira by the ford, in order to forage on the right bank, Lord Wellington suddenly appeared, and instantly attacked the divisions left so imprudently on the hither bank. Ney himself, at the head of the 39th, bravely repulsed with the bayonet a charge of English dragoons, but their colonel, Lamour, having been killed by a bullet, the 39th, losing their heads, flung themselves back on the 59th and carried them away. At the same moment, one of our batteries inadvertently sent a shot in their direction, and our men, thinking they were surrounded, fled in a panic to the bridge. Lamotte, who could see all this from the other bank, tried to bring his cavalry across in support; but instead of

coming by the difficult ford where he had gone over, he took the shortest way, and so blocked the bridge with his brigade just as the fugitives came up from the opposite direction. No one could pass, and a good many men, seeing the bridge thus blocked, made for the ford and threw themselves in. Most got over, but several missed their footing and were drowned. Meanwhile Ney, exhausting every effort to repair his mistake, succeeded at length in collecting a battalion of the 27th, and making his way to the divisions of Mermet and Ferey, who were holding their ground manfully, put himself at their head, and attacking on his side drove the English back to their camp. Astounded at this vigorous attack, and hearing the shouts of our men who were struggling to cross the Ceira, they imagined that the whole French army was upon them. Panic-stricken in their turn they flung down their arms, left their guns, and took to headlong flight. We on the right bank then witnessed a sight unusual in war: two sides flying each from the other in complete disorder! Finally the panic on both sides was checked, and English and French returned to the abandoned ground to pick up their muskets; but both sides were so much ashamed of themselves that though they were quite close to each other not a shot was fired nor any challenges exchanged, and they retired to their positions in silence. Wellington did not even venture to oppose Ney's retreat; and he re-crossed the river and cut the bridge. In this queer engagement the English had some 200 men disabled, and killed 50 of ours; but we lost 100 by drowning, and unhappily the 39th lost its eagle. The best divers failed to recover it at the time, but it was found by Portuguese peasants in the following summer, when part of the river bed was dry.

Ney visited on General Lamotte his wrath for the check he had received, and withdrew from him the command of his brigade. Lamotte was, however, a good and brave officer, and in after times the Emperor did him justice. Next, eager to have his revenge, he waited on the banks of the Ceira throughout part of the 16th, in the hope of attacking Wellington when his turn came to cross, and Masséna had to send four or five aides-de-camp before he could induce him to follow the retreat. On the 17th we crossed the Alva at Ponte Murcelha, and marched for five days, reaching Celorico unmolested.

The valley between the Mondego and the Estrella is exceedingly fertile, and we lived in comfort. Thus, on finding ourselves again at Celorico, whence Masséna had had the unlucky idea of turning aside from this fertile region on our

outward march, and taking to the mountain district of Busaco, the army blamed him afresh, feeling that his mistake had cost many thousands of lives, and brought the campaign to failure. The marshal now—unable to make up his mind to re-enter Spain—resolved to hold his ground at any cost in Portugal. His plan was to regain the Tagus by way of Guarda and Alfayates, and having rebuilt the bridge of Alcantara, to join the French troops under Soult before Badajos, with them to enter the Alemtejo, and at once march upon Lisbon. He hoped thus to force Wellington to march back at once for the defence of the capital, which, being unfortified on the left bank of the Tagus, would have very little means of resistance. To relieve the march, the marshal sent all sick and wounded into Spain, but I declined to go with them, preferring to remain with my brother and my comrades. Masséna having communicated his plan to his lieutenants at Celorico, Marshal Ney, who was burning with desire to recover his independence, opposed the idea of a new campaign, declaring that he was going to take his troops back to Spain, because they could no longer get any bread in Portugal. This was true, but the army had been accustomed to live without bread for the last six months, each soldier receiving several pounds of meat and plenty of wine. This fresh disobedience on Ney's part roused Masséna's wrath, and he replied by a general order, removing Marshal Ney from the command of the 6th corps. This act of vigour, just and necessary as it was, had been too long delayed; he should have done it at the first sign of insubordination. Ney at first refused to go away, saying that as the Emperor had given him the command of the 6th corps he should not resign it but by his direction; but on the order being repeated, he returned to Spain, and thence went to Paris. The command of the 6th corps fell by right of seniority to General Loison. Ney's dismissal produced an impression upon the army which was all the stronger that the principal cause of it was known, and that, insisting on a return to Spain, he had expressed the general wish of the troops.

On the 24th, the army began to move back upon the Tagus, and occupied Guarda. Of all towns in the Peninsula, this is in the highest situation. Several men died from the cold, and my wound in the side became very painful. Here Masséna received several despatches from Berthier, nearly all two months old; which shows what a mistake Napoleon had made in thinking that from Paris he could direct the movements of an army in Portugal. These despatches reached the commander-

in-chief in a manner which, up to then, had been unknown in the French army. Prince Berthier had entrusted them to his aide-de-camp, M. de Canouville, but that young officer, who was one of the beaux of the army, seeing the difficulty of reaching Masséna's army, was satisfied with depositing them at Ciudad Rodrigo, and returned to Paris. Now Paris was the very place from which, on account of a notorious freak on his part, he was desired to keep away. The story is as follows: it carries us back to the time when General Bonaparte was commanding the Army of Italy, and several ladies of his family joined him at Milan. One of them married one of his most attached generals, and as, in the fashion of the time, she used, when riding, to wear a hussar pelisse over her habit, Bonaparte gave her one, handsomely furred and with diamond buttons. Some years afterwards, this lady, having lost her first husband, married a foreign prince. In the spring of 1811, the Emperor, when reviewing the guard in the Place du Carrousel, noticed among Berthier's staff Canouville, wearing the pelisse which he had formerly given to his kinswoman, the identity of which was established by the fur and the diamonds. Napoleon recognised them, and displayed much annoyance. The lady, it was said, was severely reprimanded, and one hour later the imprudent captain received an order to carry despatches to Masséna, who was enjoined in them to keep that officer with him for an unstated time. Canouville had his suspicions, and, as I have just related, took advantage of the chance which prevented him from entering Portugal. But hardly had he got back to Paris, when he was packed off again to the Peninsula, where he arrived very much ashamed at his discomfiture. The conversation of this modern Lauzun amused us, as he gave us the latest news of what had been taking place in the Paris drawing-rooms during our absence, and we laughed much at the contrast between his elegant costume and the dilapidations of our uniforms after a year's campaigning. Canouville, who at first was much astonished by his rapid transition from Parisian boudoirs to a bivouac among the rocks of Portugal, soon resigned himself to the change. He was a man of good wit, and of courage, and in the following year fell bravely in the battle of the Moskowa.

CHAPTER LVIII.

The despatches which Canouville had left at Ciudad Rodrigo reached Masséna, as I have said, at Guarda, just when he was making arrangements to hold the upper Tagus; and instead of going on at once with his movement, he wasted some days in replying to these letters of two months ago. This delay was injurious to us, for the enemy took advantage of it to bring up his troops, and attack us at Guarda. We repulsed[1] him here, and so in the other partial combats which Masséna sustained while awaiting the officers whom he had sent to Alcantara. On learning from their report that it would be impossible to feed the army in a country devoid of resources, Masséna's will had at last to yield before accumulated obstacles, aggravated by the opposition of the generals and the destitution of the troops: and it was decided to return to Spain. Still, however, the commander-in-chief delayed, and Wellington profited by a false move on the part of Reynier to attack him at Sabugal. The fight was undecisive; but we lost two or three hundred more men in a glorious but useless engagement.

Next day, April 1, the army crossed the frontier and encamped on Spanish territory. It still included more than 45,000 effectives, and had sent more than 10,000 sick and wounded to Rodrigo and Salamanca. We had entered Portugal with 60,000 combatants, besides the division of the 9th corps which had joined us. During this long campaign, therefore, we had lost about 10,000 men killed, dead of illness, and prisoners.

The army took post round Almeida, Ciudad Rodrigo, and Zamora. Masséna was thus in a most awkward position, for the two fortresses and the surrounding country were under the authority of Bessières, to whom the Emperor had entrusted the command of a new army called the 'Northern,' entirely composed of troops belonging to the Young Guard. Hence arose a conflict of authority between the two marshals, Bessières

[1] [So one has to render *repousser;* but, seeing that as a matter of fact the French were forced to evacuate Guarda, the words evidently do not correspond accurately in meaning.]

wishing to keep all the supplies for his troops, while Masséna reasonably maintained that his army, which had endured so many hardships in Portugal, had a right to at least an equal share in the distribution of provisions. The Emperor, usually so farsighted, had not given any orders to meet the case of Masséna's army being forced to evacuate Spain. Great perplexity, therefore, prevailed on the frontier, especially as to the defence of Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida. These two fortresses, though in different countries, are so near that it was unnecessary to hold both, and the Emperor had ordered the withdrawal of the garrison of Almeida and the destruction of the ramparts, already much shattered by the explosion of the previous year. But just when the governor, General Brénier, was taking steps for the destruction of the place, he had received a counter-order from the War Minister, so that Masséna, who meantime arrived from Portugal, could not decide anything. However, as the troops could not subsist in the sterile neighbourhood of Almeida, he was obliged to take them away, and abandon the place to its own resources. These consisted of a weak garrison victualled for twenty-five days. If positive orders had been received, a week during which the army was present would have sufficed to destroy the fortifications; but as soon as it was gone the English hastened to invest the place, and next month an expedition had to be undertaken for its relief which cost many lives, and did not attain its object.

The order placing the Count of Erlon and his force under the command of Masséna came at length, three months too late. After cantoning his army between Rodrigo, Zamora, and Salamanca, the marshal, on April 9, fixed his head-quarters in the last-named town. While we were there an event occurred not very creditable to the English army. Colonel Waters, a member of Wellington's staff, had been taken prisoner by our troops; and as he gave his parole Masséna allowed him to retain his sword and his horse, and to lodge each night in a private house. He thus travelled at liberty, in company with our columns, till one day when they were halted in the wood of Matilla, he seized the moment when all were reposing, and putting his excellent horse into a gallop, disappeared. Three days later he rejoined Wellington, who seemed to find the trick highly amusing.[1] When Masséna complained that the Portuguese militia had been massacring French prisoners, and recently

[1] [Napier (book xii. ch. 5) expressly states that Waters had refused his parole.

a colonel, the same Wellington replied, 'That he had to employ all his resources to repel a war of invasion, and could not answer for the excesses into which the peasants were led.'

Rest and good care at Salamanca soon cured me; but my satisfaction at this was alloyed by a vexatious incident which caused me much trouble. My good friend Ligniville left us in consequence of a serious difference with Masséna. The marshal had entrusted him the laborious duties of chief equerry, which he performed, I may say, quite voluntarily, and out of good-nature. Fond as he was of horses, he had much difficulty in feeding them in Spain and Portugal, but he made the best of it. It had been ascertained that in order to convey all the utensils and baggage of the head-quarters thirty mules were required, and Ligniville, before entering on the campaign, had proposed to obtain them; but Masséna, not wishing to bear the cost himself, had ordered the commissary-general to get them for him. He had these pack animals with him throughout. Now the Spaniards have a good habit of shaving their mules' backs, so that the hair may not work into lumps under the pack, and make them sore. The operation can only be done by experts, and is pretty costly. Masséna, therefore, proposed to Ligniville to make the Mayor of Salamanca pay the cost out of the local funds; but Ligniville refused to be a party to what he thought an exaction, and a scene ensued. Finally my friend told the marshal that as he showed so little gratitude for his condescension in acting as equerry he would not only vacate the post, but offer his resignation, and rejoin the 18th Dragoons, to which he belonged. In vain did Masséna try every means to make him stay; Ligniville, a calm but very determined man, was inflexible, and fixed the day for his departure. Major Pelet being away on service, I was doing the duty of senior aide-de-camp, and in that capacity I assembled all the staff-officers, and proposed that we should show our esteem for our good comrade by riding with him a league from the town. My suggestion was accepted, and in order that Prosper Masséna should not seem to be finding fault with his father, we were careful to tell him off to remain in the ante-room while we escorted Ligniville. Our farewell was cordial, for we all liked him. Though our action was perfectly honourable, Masséna was angry at it, and accused me of instigating it; and from that time his grudge against me revived, though my behaviour during the campaign had restored his confidence and interest in me.

Meanwhile the garrison of Almeida, invested by the English, and almost out of provisions, was on the point of surrendering,

and the Emperor, in order to deprive the English of this triumph, had ordered Masséna to march his whole forces to the place and blow up the ramparts. But this operation had, as I have said, now become a very delicate one, since a considerable force was blockading Almeida and we should have to fight a battle. There was another not less serious difficulty. Masséna's army, distributed through the province of Salamanca, was not exactly living in the arms of plenty. Still every cantonment could supply the small body quartered in it, while if we were to march on the English, we must concentrate our troops and provide supplies which we had no sufficient means of storing or transporting.

As governor of the province, Marshal Bessières could dispose of all its resources, but he reserved them for the regiments of the guard. He had plenty of cavalry and a formidable artillery, while Masséna, though his infantry was still respectable, was short of horses. He therefore asked Bessières to lend him some, and all the letters which he received from him abounded in the most encouraging protestations. As, however, they remained without result, and Almeida was known to be at the last gasp, Masséna no longer contented himself with writing to his colleague, whose head-quarters were at Valladolid, but resolved to send an aide-de-camp, who could explain the gravity of the position, and press him to send support. The commander-in-chief selected me to discharge this duty. Having been severely wounded on March 14, I was, five weeks later, not exactly in condition to ride post-haste over roads covered with guerillas. In any other circumstances I should have remarked as much to the marshal, but as he was cross with me, and as I had, through excessive zeal, asked leave to resume my duties (not expecting to have such a severe job in the course of the next few days) I did not care to throw myself on Masséna's pity, so I started in spite of the remonstrances of my comrades and my brother, who offered to take my place. In order to perform the duty I had to gallop the whole way on post horses; the wound in my side reopened and caused me much pain, still I reached Valladolid. Marshal Bessières, to prove outright that he cherished no grudge against me in regard to the quarrel between Marshal Lannes and himself on the battlefield of Essling, in which I was so innocently involved, received me very kindly. Complying with Masséna's reiterated request, he promised to send several regiments and three batteries of field artillery as well as abundant provisions. In such haste was I to report this good

news to Masséna that I started back after a few hours' rest. At one moment I thought I was going to be attacked, but at the sight of the pennons on the lances of our escort, the *guerrilleros*, who had a particular dread of that arm, took to their heels, and I got back to the marshal without any trouble. Satisfied as he was with the result of my mission, he did not say a single good-natured word about the zeal which I had shown. It must be admitted that the many annoyances which he had all around him did a good deal to embitter his naturally vindictive temper. He had to undergo another and crowning one. Our war in the Peninsula being directed from Paris, many strange anomalies resulted. For instance, just as the chief of the staff was directing Masséna to bring all his troops together, and hasten to the relief of Almeida, he was ordering the Count of Erlon, whose corps formed part of Masséna's army, to repair at once to Andalusia and join Soult. Ordered thus in two contrary directions, and knowing that his troops would be better off in fertile Andalusia than in sterile Portugal, Erlon was making ready to start for Seville. But as his departure would have deprived Masséna of two fine infantry divisions, and made it impossible for him to relieve Almeida, according to the Emperor's instructions, he declined to allow it. The other insisted, and the wretched squabbles which we had already witnessed in the past winter with regard to the corps were revived. At length, under pressure from Masséna, the Count of Erlon agreed to remain till the blockade of Almeida was raised. That a commander-in-chief should have thus to entreat his subordinate was quite unreasonable, and could only injure military discipline.

Meanwhile, Bessières' promised reinforcements not having arrived by the 21st, Masséna, reckoning only on his own resources to make his way to Almeida, concentrated his army on the 26th at Ciudad Rodrigo. But in order to feed the assembled forces, it was necessary to draw upon the supplies of Rodrigo, and thus compromise the future fate of that important place. We were only three leagues from the English who were surrounding Almeida. We could not communicate with the place, and we did not know their strength. But we knew that Wellington had gone beyond Badajos with a strong detachment, and Masséna, trusting that he would be unable to be back for eight or ten days, wished to take advantage of his absence and accomplish the revictualling of Almeida. Wellington, however, hearing of the movement of the French, returned promptly on his tracks, and was in front of us on

May 1. This was a great misfortune, for it was probable that General Spencer, who was in temporary command of the English army, would not have ventured to take the responsibility of engaging such an adversary as Masséna, and Almeida might have been revictualled without trouble.

Great was the joy of our soldiers, who, though they had lived some days on half rations of bread and less of meat, were yet eager to fight, when, on the morning of the 2nd, they saw a weak column of Marshal Bessières' troops approaching, and took it for an advance-guard. But the reinforcement so pompously announced, and so long awaited, was confined to 1,500 cavalry, 6 guns, and 30 good teams. Bessières was bringing neither ammunition nor provisions. It was a regular hoax. Masséna was horrified, but very soon grew angry at seeing that Bessières was himself in command of this feeble succour. Indeed, the presence of that marshal was calculated to annoy him. The Army of Portugal was, it is true, in a province subject to the jurisdiction of Bessières, but it was independent of him, and solely under Masséna's orders, nor was there any reason, because Bessières was lending a few soldiers, that he should come in person to control in some measure his colleague's actions. Masséna understood this, and said to us, 'He would have done much better to have sent me a few more thousand men with ammunition and provisions, and to have remained at the centre of his province than to come examining and criticising what I am going to do.' Bessières was therefore very coldly received, but this did not hinder him from following Masséna during the short campaign and giving him his advice. The army started on the afternoon of May 2, and hostilities began the next day. A new series of mistakes commenced, arising from the ill-will of certain generals towards Masséna, and the want of understanding which prevailed among the rest.

We fell in with the Anglo-Portuguese army on the frontier, posted in front of Almeida, and blockading the place. The troops were occupying a broad plateau between the stream of the Turones and the one which flows in the deep gorge called Dos Casas. Lord Wellington's left was near the ruined Fort Concepcion, his centre towards the village of Alameda, and his right posted at Fuentes d'Oñoro was prolonged towards the marsh of Nave de Avel, whence flows the stream which some call Dos Casas and others D'Oñoro; this brook covered his front. The French came up in three columns by the Ciudad Rodrigo road; the 6th and 9th corps, under Loison, formed the right wing, facing Fuentes; the 8th corps, under Junot, and Mont-

brun's cavalry, were in the centre; General Reynier, with the 2nd corps, watched Alameda and Fort Concepcion on the right. Several picked battalions, the lancers of the guard, and some batteries formed the reserve; it was commanded by General Lepic, famous for his brilliant conduct at Eylau.

Our troops were hardly in their respective positions when General Loison, without awaiting Masséna's orders for a concerted movement, charged the village of Oñoro, occupied by the Highlanders and some picked battalions. Their attack was so brisk that the enemy, although entrenched in solid stone houses, were compelled to abandon the position. But they retired into an old chapel on the top of the huge rocks which command Oñoro, and it was impossible to dislodge them. Masséna, therefore, gave orders for the moment only to occupy the village and to garnish all the houses with troops. But the order was badly executed, for Ferey's division, to whom the duty fell, carried away by the ardour of a first success, formed in a mass outside Oñoro, thus exposing itself to an artillery and musketry fire from the English at the chapel. Finally, to complete our disasters, our troops were thrown into disorder by a deplorable occurrence, which should have been foreseen. In Ferey's division there was a battalion of the Hanoverian legion in the French service. Their uniform was red, like the English, but they had the usual grey overcoat of the French soldier, and accordingly their commander, who had had several men killed by our people at Busaco, asked leave for his men to wear their greatcoats instead of rolling them up, as the order was. But General Loison replied that he must follow the order given to the whole corps. The result was a cruel blunder. The 66th regiment, having been sent to support the Hanoverians, who were in the fighting line, mistook them in the smoke for an English battalion, and fired into them, while our artillery, equally misled by the red coats, played on them with grape. I must do the brave Hanoverians the justice to say that, placed as they were between two fires, they endured them for a long time without recoiling a step, but after losing 100 men killed and many wounded, the battalion was compelled to retire, passing along one side of the village. Another regiment, which was entering the village at that moment, seeing the red coats on their flank, supposed that the position had been turned by an English column, and the enemy cleverly took advantage of the resulting confusion to recapture Fuentes d'Oñoro, which would not have happened if the generals had followed Masséna's order to line the windows with infantry.

Night put an end to this first engagement, in which we had 600 men disabled; the enemy's loss was about the same, and fell chiefly upon their best troops, the Highlanders. Colonel Williams was killed.

I could never understand how Wellington consented to await the French in so unfavourable a position as that in which General Spencer's incapacity had placed the troops. The allies had in fact in their rear not only the fortress of Alameda barring their only good line of retreat, but also the Coa, a stream with steep banks and difficult approaches, which might have caused the entire loss of the army if it had been compelled to retreat. It is true that the steep and deep ravine of the Dos Casas protected the English front from Fort Concepcion to Nave de Avel, but beyond that point the sides of the ravine fall away and sink to a marsh which is easy to cross. Even so, Wellington might have used it to cover his extreme right if he had defended it with a good regiment supported by artillery, but forgetting the harm which had resulted at Busaco from assigning to Trant's irregulars the task of preventing the French from making a flank march by Boialva, he fell into the same error again when he entrusted the defence of the marsh to the irregular bands of Don Julian, who were quite unfit to resist troops of the line. On hearing of this negligence through a cavalry patrol, Masséna ordered everything to be got ready for crossing the marsh at daybreak the next morning, in order to take the enemy's right wing in rear. Plenty of fascines were constructed during the night, and the 8th corps, with part of the 9th, marched in silence towards Nave de Avel, Ferey's division remaining before Oñoro, which was still occupied by the enemy.

At daybreak on May 5 a company of light infantry, slipping through the willows and the reeds, crossed the marsh noiselessly, and, passing the fascines along, filled up the bad places, which turned out to be much fewer in number than we had supposed. Don Julian and his guerillas, deeming themselves secure behind the marsh, kept such a bad watch that our people found them asleep and killed some thirty of them. All the rest of the band, instead of keeping up a smart fire, if only to warn the English, took to its heels and fled beyond the Turones, and Don Julian, brave as he was, could not keep his undisciplined soldiers in hand. Profiting by Wellington's negligence, our troops hastened to cross the marsh, and we had on the other side four divisions of infantry, all Montbrun's cavalry with several batteries, and were in possession of Nave de Avel before

the English found it out. This was one of the finest movements which Masséna ever devised, the last flicker of an expiring lamp.

By our passage of the marsh the enemy's right was completely out-flanked, and Wellington's situation became extremely difficult. Not only had he to execute a huge change of front to meet those of our divisions which were occupying Nave de Avel and Pozo Velho, but he was compelled to leave part of his troops before Fuentes d'Oñoro and Alameda to check Erlon's and Reynier's corps, which were making ready to cross the Dos Casas and attack the enemy during their evolutions. Lord Wellington had so fully believed his extreme right wing to be sheltered by the marsh, that he had only left a few cavalry scouts at that point, but seeing that wing turned he made haste to send forward towards Pozo Velho the first infantry brigade that came to hand. This advanced guard was overthrown and cut to pieces by our cavalry under Montbrun. General Mancune, following up this advance, flung himself into the wood of Pozo Velho, driving from it the Highlanders with a loss of 250 prisoners and 100 killed. Thus everything was promising a brilliant victory for the French when a discussion arose between Generals Loison and Montbrun, and the latter stayed the march of the cavalry reserve under the plea that the batteries of the Guard which had been promised him had not yet come up. In point of fact, Marshal Bessières had detained them without letting Masséna know, and he, learning of the difficulty too late, sent several guns to Montbrun. The delay, however, was doubly fatal to us, first because Loison's infantry, seeing that it was no longer supported by Montbrun's cavalry, hesitated to engage in the plain, while in the second place this disastrous halt gave Wellington time to bring up all his cavalry to support Houstoun's and Craufurd's divisions, which alone were as yet in position before us. Meantime, by Masséna's orders, General Montbrun, covering his artillery with some squadrons of hussars, advanced afresh, and, suddenly unmasking his guns, tore up Houstoun's division, and when it began to waver charged it with Wathiez' and Fournier's brigades. These cut the 51st regiment almost entirely to pieces, and completely routed the rest of Houstoun's division. The fugitives reached Villa Formosa on the left bank of the Turones, and owed their safety solely to the regiment of *chasseurs Britanniques*, who, ranged behind a long and stout stone wall, stayed the dash of our troopers by a fire no less well sustained than aimed.

In this part of the field Wellington had now only Craufurd's division and the cavalry, the rest of his army, which had been

taken in rear, not having as yet completed the immense change of front necessary to bring them into line against the French. As the ground on which they were now fighting had been, until we crossed the marsh, the least exposed part, the English commissariat and the wounded, the servants, baggage and led horses, the soldiers who had got separated from their regiments, were crowded together there, and the vast plain as far as the Turones was covered with a disorderly multitude, in the midst of which the three squares formed by Craufurd's infantry looked like mere specks; and there we had within cannon-shot, and all ready to charge the enemy, the corps of Loison and Junot, 5,000 cavalry, and four field-batteries into the bargain. The 8th corps was already clear of the wood of Pozo Velho, the 9th was vigorously attacking the village of Fuentes d'Oñoro by the right bank of the Dos Casas, and General Reynier had orders to debouch by Alameda, and take the English in the rear. We had only to march forward. Indeed, Napier, who was present at this battle, admits that, during the whole war, there was no moment of such danger for the British army. But blind Fortune decided otherwise. General Loison, instead of marching by the left bank to take Fuentes d'Oñoro in rear, while Drouet d'Erlon attacked in front, lost much time and made false movements which allowed Wellington to reinforce that important point—the key, indeed, of the position. General Reynier, on his side, did not carry out Masséna's orders; for, under the plea that he had too strong a force in front of him, he never went beyond Alameda, and took scarcely any part in the action. In spite of all these mishaps, so great were our advantages that it was yet possible to win the battle. Montbrun's cavalry, having beaten that of the enemy, soon found itself in presence of Craufurd's infantry. It charged and broke two squares, cutting one literally to pieces. The men of the second threw down their arms and fled to the plain; Colonel Hill surrendered his sword to Staff-Adjutant Dulimberg of the 13th Chasseurs, and we took 1,500 prisoners. The third English square held firm. Montbrun caused Fournier's and Wathiez' brigades to attack it, and they had pierced one of the faces when both generals had their horses killed under them and all the colonels were wounded, so that there was nobody to take charge of the victorious regiments. Montbrun hastened up, but the enemy's square had been re-formed, and, in order to attack it, he would have to re-form his own squadrons. While he was thus engaged, Masséna sent an aide-de-camp to General Lepic, in command of the reserve cavalry of the Guard, with

orders to charge. But Lepic, biting his sword-blade in desperation, replied, with much regret, that his immediate chief, Marshal Bessières, had forbidden him to take the Guard into action without his order. Ten aides-de-camp went off in every direction to look for Bessières; but he, after being for some days always at Masséna's side, had now disappeared. This was not owing to any want of courage, but of set design, or from a jealousy which made him unmindful of the interest of France and unwilling to send a single man under his command in order to secure a victory the credit of which would fall to his comrade. At last, after a quarter of an hour, Bessières was discovered at a distance from the field of battle, wandering on the further side of the marsh, and examining the construction of the fascines which had been used in the morning. He hastened up with a show of earnestness, but the decisive moment had been missed, through his fault, and did not recur. The English had recovered from the disorder caused by Montbrun's charge, and had brought up a powerful artillery which was playing our squadrons with grape, while their men were recapturing the prisoners whom we had taken. In short, Lord Wellington's change of front was completed, and his army in its new position on the plateau, with its right resting on the Turones, its left on Fuentes d'Oñoro.[1]

At the sight of this new and solidly-constituted line Masséna halted his troops and opened a heavy cannonade, causing much destruction in the enemy's ranks. A general charge of our cavalry might have crushed them, and Masséna hoped that Bessières would at last allow the regiment of the Guard to take part in this 'pull all together,' which would infallibly have given us the victory. But Bessières refused, saying that he was responsible to the Emperor for any losses which his Guard might incur, as if all the army were not in the Emperor's service, and the essential point with him were not to hear that the English had been driven out of the Peninsula! All the soldiers, those of the Guard most of all, were indignant at Bessières' decision, wanting to know what that marshal had come before Almeida for, if he did not wish his troops to take part in the fighting which was to save the place. This unexpected mishap changed the complexion of affairs at once; every moment the English were receiving reinforcements, and

[1] [It will be seen that, while General Marbot's account of this battle agrees in substance with Napier's—from which, indeed, several passages are very literally copied—the order of events has been somewhat dislocated, and their relative importance confused.]

one of their divisions, coming from the force blockading Almeida, had just crossed the Turones, and was forming in the plain The position of the two armies being thus altered, Masséna's dispositions had to be altered likewise. He resolved, therefore, to move the bulk of his troops towards Almeida, and, joining Reynier, to fall upon the right and rear of the enemy. This was the counterpart of the previous night's movement on Nave de Avel ; but a new obstacle hindered its execution. General Eblé, commanding the artillery, hurried up with the news that he had, at the artillery park, not more than four cartridges per man, which, with those left in their pouches, gave not more than a score to each soldier. This was an insufficient supply with which to renew the struggle against a foe who was sure to resist desperately, and Masséna ordered every wagon to be sent instantly to Rodrigo for ammunition. But the commissary-general reported that he had made use of them to fetch from the same place the bread required for the morrow's supply. Having no other means of transport, Masséna asked Bessières to lend him the Guard's ammunition-wagons for a few hours; but he replied that his teams were already tired, and that a night march over bad roads would finish them—he could not lend them till the next day. Masséna flew into a rage, exclaiming that victory was being snatched from him a second time ; but Bessières maintained his refusal, and a violent scene took place between the two marshals.

At daybreak on the 6th, Bessières' wagons started for Rodrigo ; but they moved so slowly that the cartridges did not come till the afternoon, and Wellington had employed the twenty-four hours in entrenching his new position, especially the upper part of the village of Fuentes d'Oñoro. It could not now be taken save at the expense of torrents of French blood, and the opportunity of victory was hopelessly lost to us.

CHAPTER LIX.

When it became clear that there could be no question of another battle, or of revictualling Almeida, it became Masséna's duty to try at least to save the garrison of the place after destroying the fortifications. To this end some means must be found of communicating with the governor—a task which, as the town was strongly invested, was difficult, if not impossible. Three brave men, whose names deserve to be recorded in our annals, volunteered for the perilous duty of passing through the enemy's camp, and carrying to General Brénier instructions with regard to the evacuation. These three intrepid soldiers were Pierre Zaniboni, corporal of the 76th, Jean Noel Lami, a canteen-man in Ferey's division, and André Tillet, of the 6th Light Infantry. They had all taken part in the siege of Almeida the year before, and knew the surrounding district thoroughly. They were to take different roads, and each bore a letter in cipher to the governor. They started at nightfall on the 6th; Zaniboni, disguised as a Spanish pedlar, for he spoke the language well, slipped into the English bivouacs on the plea of selling tobacco and buying dead men's clothes; Lami, as a Portuguese peasant, played much the same rôle at another part of the English lines. This kind of petty trade is common in all armies, and the two Frenchmen went from line to line without awaking any suspicion. Just as they were drawing near the gates of Almeida, however, the trick was discovered—in what manner has never been explained—the poor fellows were searched, and being convicted by the letters found on them, were shot as spies, according to the law of war which punishes with death every soldier who lays aside his uniform when on duty.

Tillet, with better judgment than his unhappy comrades, started in uniform, with his sword. Following at first the deep gorge of the Dos Casas stream, up to his waist in the water, he crept slowly from rock to rock, hiding himself behind them at the least sound, until he was near the ruined Fort Concepcion. There, leaving the stream, he crawled on all fours through the full corn, and at length reached the outworks of Almeida, being

received there at dawn on the 17th by the French outposts. The letter which he bore to General Brénier contained the order to blow up the ramparts, and retire forthwith on Barba del Puerco, whither Reynier's troops were to precede him. The arrival of his emissary was to be announced to Masséna by salvos of the heaviest guns, and on hearing these the marshal made the necessary preparations for retreating on Ciudad Rodrigo, being assured of the imminent demolition of the ramparts. These operations take some time, as the ramparts must be mined, the chambers of the mines charged, ammunition, artillery, and gun-carriages destroyed, and so on. We had therefore to wait till the noise of the cannon let us know that Brénier was evacuating the place, and the two armies remained facing each other for four days without any further action. The English asked for a suspension of hostilities to bury the dead—a homage to brave warriors which all civilised nations ought to practice. In the plain the English corpses were by far the more in number; but it was quite otherwise in the village, where the enemy had fought sheltered by houses and garden-walls. Many wounded were picked up on both sides; among ours was Captain Septeuil, an aide-de-camp to Berthier, who had, like Canouville, been sent from Paris to Masséna. He was still more unlucky, for his leg was smashed by a round-shot, and had to be amputated on the field. He bore the operation bravely and is still living.

Seeing the French army remain stationary in front of him for several days, and doubtless hearing the salvos from Almeida, Wellington perceived that Masséna intended to facilitate the escape of the garrison. He therefore reinforced the blockading division, and gave General Campbell, who was in command of it, orders so well devised that if they had been duly carried out Brénier and his troops would have had small chance of escape. At midnight on the 10th a long, dull, explosion announced to the French army that Almeida existed no longer—at least, as a fortress. In order to puzzle the allies, General Brénier had kept them occupied for several days past on the side opposite to that by which he intended to make his escape. This was carried out without disaster, and it was the same at first with his retreat, which he led, guiding himself by the moon and the direction of the streams. He had come within a short distance of General Heudelet's division, which Masséna had sent to meet him, when he fell in with a Portuguese brigade. He attacked and dispersed it, continuing his retreat swiftly; but General Pack, warned by the sound of musketry, hastened up from Malpartida

and pursued our columns, firing. Quickly, too, General Cotton's cavalry made a vigorous attack on the rear-guard, causing it some loss. Our people at length caught sight of the bridge of Barba del Puerco, and Heudelet's division advancing to meet them. Believing themselves saved, they gave vent to their joy; but it was written that the soil of Portugal was yet to be watered with French blood.

The last of our columns had to pass through a defile opening into a quarry among steep and pointed rocks. The enemy was pressing on from all sides, and several sections of our rear-guard were cut off by the English cavalry. Seeing this, the French soldiers climbed nimbly up the steep sides of the ravine, and escaped the English cavalry, only to fall into another danger. The Portuguese infantry pursued them on the heights, pouring a murderous fire into them. When at length our men, on the point of being succoured by Heudelet's division, thought that they were in sight of safety, the earth suddenly failed under their feet, engulfing part of them in a yawning chasm, at the foot of a huge rock. The head of the pursuing Portuguese column incurred the same fate, rolling pell-mell into the gulf with our people. Heudelet's division succeeded in forcing the allied troops back beyond the sight of this disaster, and when the foot of the precipice was explored, a fearful sight appeared. Three hundred French and Portuguese soldiers lay there, dead or horribly mutilated. Some sixty French and thirty Portuguese alone survived this terrible fall. Such was the last incident in the laborious and unlucky campaign of the French in Portugal. They never entered the country again. Masséna's army, leaving the battlefield of Fuentes d'Oñoro, retreated towards Ciudad Rodrigo, and went into cantonments, the English not following. We learnt, later on, that Wellington, angry with General Campbell for having, as he said, by neglect of his orders allowed the garrison of Almeida to escape, had brought that general to court martial, and that Campbell, in despair, had blown his brains out.[1]

Scarcely was the French army in quarters where it could rest and recruit, than Masséna began to think of reorganising it, with a view to a fresh campaign. The work was, however, barely set on foot, when Marshal Marmont arrived from Paris. Though he held his appointment to the command-in-chief, he presented himself at first as Ney's successor in the command of the 6th corps; then a few days later, when he was sufficiently

[1] [Campbell died, Governor of Madras, in 1825. The person who blew his brains out was the lieutenant-colonel of the 4th King's Own.]

acquainted with the state of affairs, he produced his commission, and handed to Masséna the Emperor's order, recalling him to Paris. This unforeseen disgrace, announced in such a way indicating that the Emperor did not approve his conduct of the operations, was a crushing blow to Masséna, but he was compelled to surrender the command to Marmont, and, taking leave of the army, he retired, in the first place, to Salamanca, after a very lively altercation with General Foy, whom he accused of having made common cause with Ney to do him a disservice with the Emperor.

On learning how vigorously General Brénier had led the retreat of the garrison of Almeida, the Emperor appointed him lieutenant-general. He rewarded also Tillet's devotion and courage with the Cross of the Legion of Honour and a pension of six hundred francs. This second favour was, in later days, the subject of a discussion in the Chamber. Tillet had become a sergeant, and had obtained a retiring pension under the Restoration. It was proposed to dock him of this by applying the law as to 'pluralities,' but General Foy eloquently pleaded the cause of the brave soldier, and he kept both his pensions.

But let us return for a moment to June 1811, when Masséna resigned his command. The war in the Peninsula was so disagreeable and so toilsome that every man longed to get back to France. The Emperor, knowing this, and wishing to keep his army up to its full strength, had decided that no officer was to leave Spain without special permission, and the order recalling Masséna authorised him to bring away only two aides-de-camp, and to leave the others at Marshal Marmont's disposal. He, having his staff complete, and knowing none of us, was no more anxious to keep us than we to stay with him. He assigned us no duties, and we passed some three weeks at Salamanca drearily enough. The time seemed, however, less long to me than to my companions, because I employed it in committing my recollections of the recent campaign to paper. I have found the same notes very useful in writing these Memoirs.

In consideration of my wound the minister at last sent me leave to return to France. Some others of Masséna's staff having also been permitted to leave the Peninsula, we joined a detachment of 500 grenadiers, who were on their way to reinforce the imperial guard. General Junot and his wife the duchess also took advantage of this escort. We travelled easily on horseback, with fine weather. On the journey some eccentric conduct on the part of Junot made me anxious as to his future.[1]

[1] [He committed suicide by leaping from a window in July 1813.]

We reached the frontier, and I could not but smile when I thought of the evil omen which I had drawn from my encounter with the black jackass on the Bidassoa bridge when last I entered Spain. The campaign had nearly been my last, but I was in France and should see my mother and another who had become very dear to me. So, forgetting past troubles, I hastened on to Paris, arriving in July, after an absence of fifteen toilsome months. Contrary to my expectation the marshal received me well, and I learnt that he had spoken very kindly of me to the Emperor. So on my first appearance at the Tuileries, the Emperor expressed his satisfaction with me, spoke with interest of Miranda de Corvo, and asked how many wounds I had now had. 'Eight, sir,' I answered. 'Well, they are eight good quarterings of nobility for you,' rejoined the Emperor.

CHAPTER LX.

I SPENT all the summer and autumn at Paris, passing some days of every month at the château of Bonneuil with M. and Mme. Desbrières. While I was away, this excellent family had shown great friendship for my mother, and before long I was permitted to pay my addresses to their daughter. Our marriage was arranged, and for a moment I hoped to obtain my promotion to colonel before the event took place.

According to etiquette the Emperor signed the marriage contracts of all his colonels, but he rarely paid this honour to officers of a lower rank; if they wished for it they had to acquaint the Minister for War with their reasons. I based my application on the fact of the Emperor having said to me just before Marengo, and soon after my father's death, 'If you behave well, and follow in his footsteps, it will be I who will act as your father.' Since that day I had been eight times wounded, and was conscious of having always done my duty. Clarke, the minister, a rough man, who nearly always rejected such applications, admitted that mine deserved consideration, and promised to present it. In a few days I was ordered to present myself at Compiègne and bring the notary with the marriage contract. When we arrived, the Emperor was out coursing—not that he cared much for this exercise, but he rightly thought that he ought to imitate the old French kings. The matter had therefore to be put off till the next day, at which the notary, who had business in Paris, was much distressed; but there was no help for it. Next day we were presented to the Emperor, and my marriage contract was signed in the room where, twenty years later, I was often on duty with the Orleans princes.

In these short interviews Napoleon was most affable. He asked several questions of the notary: inquired if the young lady was pretty, what was her dowry, and so on; and when I took leave he said that he would like me to have a good post, and that he would, before long, reward me for my good service. Then I did think that I was as good as colonel; and my hopes rose higher yet when, as I left the room, General Mouton,

Count of Lobau, assured me that my name was on the list of field-officers who were to receive regiments, an assurance all the more welcome that the Count of Lobau was in charge of that department of the War Office which dealt with promotions. I returned to Paris, therefore, with a joyful heart, and was married on November 11.

Happy in the bosom of my family, I was daily awaiting my commission as colonel, when I was informed by the minister that I had been appointed as major to the 1st Mounted Chasseurs, then in garrison at the other end of Germany. This was a severe blow. As a major I had already been thrice wounded and served two campaigns, and it was hard to have to serve again with that rank, nor, after what the Emperor and the Count of Lobau had said, could I understand why I was thus treated. However, the latter soon explained it.

After the promotion of Pelet and Casabianca, I was the senior major on Masséna's staff. But M. Barain, the artillery captain, whom I have mentioned as having lost an arm at Wagram, and who, though he had been promoted to major with a view to his service in the arsenals, had insisted on accompanying Masséna to Portugal, possessed a relative whose influence with the marshal was considerable. Through his intervention Masséna was persuaded to recommend Barain for promotion, and the Emperor, yielding with some hesitation to the same influence, made him colonel.

If I have seemed to make too much of my disappointment over this affair it must be remembered that at that time the commanders of regiments were important persons. I have known several colonels decline the rank of general, and ask as a special favour to be left at the head of their regiments.

From Masséna I received the following letter, as my sole reward for three campaigns served under him and three wounds received:

PARIS, *November* 24, 1811.

MY DEAR MARBOT,—I forward your commission, which has been sent to me. As you know, I asked for your promotion; and it is a matter of twofold regret to me that I failed to obtain it, and that I am losing your services. I appreciate them highly, and, so far as you are concerned, they are independent of the rewards which they entitle you to claim, and will always earn you the esteem of those under whom you may happen to serve. You may be sure of mine, and equally sure of my regret and my sincere attachment.

MASSÉNA.

I did not expect to see him again; but the maréchale, wishing, as she wrote, to make my wife's acquaintance, invited us to dinner. Of her I have nothing but good to say, ever since I met her at Antibes, her native place, on my way back from Genoa; so I accepted. Masséna came up to me with fresh expressions of regret, and proposed that he should apply for my nomination as officer of the Legion of Honour. I replied that, as he could do nothing for me when I was on his staff, I would not trouble him further, and would try to secure my promotion for myself; and so slipped off into the crowd of guests. I never met the marshal again, though I continued to visit his wife and son, who were both my very good friends.

I may as well give here some details of Masséna's life. As is usually the case with famous men, his biography has been very incorrectly written. André Masséna was born May 6, 1758, at Turbia, near Monaco. His grandfather, a respectable tanner, had three sons, Jules, Augustin, and Marcel. The two elder went to Nice and set up a soap-factory; Marcel entered the French service; Jules died poor, and of his five children, three, including André, were taken up by the uncle, Augustin, who, after having them taught to read and write, employed them in his soap-works. André, however, was of too adventurous a disposition to settle to business, and at the age of thirteen ran away from his uncle's house, and went to sea as a cabin-boy in a merchantman, accompanied by a cousin named Bavastro, who became in the wars of the Empire the most famous privateer in the Mediterranean. As for André, two years of hardship disgusted him with a sailor's life, and in 1775 he enlisted as a private in the Royal Italian regiment, where his uncle Marcel was sergeant-major. I knew this Marcel Masséna in 1800, when he was commandant of the fortress of Antibes. He was a serious and able man, much esteemed by his colonel, M. Chauvet d'Arlon. The colonel kindly extended his patronage to André, put him in the way of acquiring a fair knowledge of French, and in a few years promoted him to regimental staff-sergeant. He even held out to him the hope of becoming sub-lieutenant in the mounted police; but André was tired of waiting, and left the army when his time expired. On returning to civil life he rejoined his cousin Bavastro; and the two together carried on a smuggling business on a large scale, both by sea and across the land frontier. In this way Masséna acquired a thorough knowledge of the mountain paths, which was of great service to him later on, when he commanded troops in those districts. The hard life of a smuggler, with its

constant need for keeping an eye on the movements of the preventive men and concealing his own, insensibly produced in Masséna the intelligence, watchfulness, and activity so essential to a good officer. Having amassed a little capital he married a Frenchwoman, Mlle. Lamarre, daughter of a surgeon at Antibes, and was settled in that town, doing a small trade in olive oil and dried fruits, when the Revolution supervened. Then, under the impulse of his military tastes, he left his wife and his shop and enlisted in the volunteers of the Var. His knowledge of military theory and practice soon earned him the post of adjutant, and when war broke out his courage and activity quickly raised him to the rank of colonel and then of major-general. He commanded the camp called *des milles fourches*, which comprised the artillery company commanded by Captain Napoleon Bonaparte, under whom he was in after days to serve in Italy. At the siege of Toulon he distinguished himself by taking Forts Lartigues and St. Catherine, earning his promotion to lieutenant-general, and after the capture of the town returned to the Army of Italy, and was conspicuous in all the engagements between the Mediterranean coast and Piedmont.

Intelligent, restlessly active, and of undaunted courage, Masséna had become a famous man, but a serious mistake committed early in the campaign of 1796 went near to ruin his whole career. General Bonaparte had just taken the chief command of the army, which brought his former superior, Masséna, under his orders. Masséna was commanding the advanced guard, and had beaten an Austrian corps near Cairo. Learning that the enemy's officers had left a good supper all ready prepared in a neighbouring village inn, he and some of his officers thought they would take advantage of this windfall. They left the division encamped on the top of a high hill; but meantime, the Austrians having recovered from their alarm returned to the attack at daybreak, and charged the French corps. Our men, though taken by surprise, defended themselves bravely, but as their general was not there to lead them, they were pushed back to the edge of the plateau, and would certainly have been heavily defeated by the superior number of the enemy. Just then, Masséna, having made his way through the Austrian skirmishers, hurried up by a path which he knew of old, and appeared in front of his troops. In their indignation they received him with well-deserved hootings, but the general, little perturbed, resumed the command, and marched forward with his division to rejoin the army. It was then seen that one battalion, which had been posted the day before on an isolated

spur, had no practicable road by which they could descend without going a long way round, and exposing themselves to the enemy's fire. Masséna made his way alone, climbing the steep slope on hands and knees, towards this battalion, and on reaching it addressed the men, assuring them that if they would do as he did, he would get them out of their fix. Then, ordering them to sheath bayonets, he sat down on the snow at the edge of the slope, and, pushing himself with his hands, slid down to the bottom. The soldiers, shouting with laughter, did the same thing, and in the twinkling of an eye the whole battalion was out of range of the astonished Austrians. This way of descending, much like that which the Swiss peasants call glissading,[1] had certainly never before been employed by regular troops. Extraordinary as it may seem, the story is none the less true ; I have not only been assured of it by various generals and other officers who were then in Masséna's division, but nine years afterwards, when Marshal Augereau received the Emperor and all the marshals at La Houssaye, I heard them chaffing Masséna about the new mode of retreat which he used on that occasion. It is stated that on the day when Masséna employed this comical expedient, to which he had been well accustomed in his smuggling days, General Bonaparte, thinking that as a very young commander-in-chief it was his duty to show especial severity towards officers who failed in their duty, gave orders that Masséna should be tried by court martial on a charge of having abandoned his post, which would involve the penalty of death, or at least, dismissal. But just as he was about to be put under arrest, the battle of Montenotte began, and after the complete rout of the Austrian army, to which Masséna so largely contributed, there could not well be any talk of trying him. So his fault was forgotten, and he was able to continue his glorious career.

He distinguished himself at Lodi, Milan, Verona, Arcola, but above all, at Rivoli, and his success gained him from General Bonaparte the famous nickname, ' The spoilt child of victory.' After the preliminaries of peace had been signed at Leoben, he was commissioned to take the draft to the Government, and was received in Paris with the strongest marks of admiration. But his triumph was tarnished by his always prevailing fault of extreme avarice. General Duphot, French ambassador at Rome, had been assassinated; the task of taking

[1] [In the original ' *la ramasse*,' a word which does not seem to be now in use.]

vengeance was entrusted to part of the Army of Italy, under the command, at first, of Berthier, and when he was called away to Egypt, of Masséna. Very soon after the arrival of that general, the army began to complain that it was in a state of destitution, without clothing or food, while those who had the management were drawing millions from the Papal States and living in luxury. At length, a deputation of one hundred officers was sent to demand from Masséna an account of his expenditure; but whether he had no defence to offer, or refused to recognise an act of insubordination, he declined to clear himself, and as the troops persisted, found himself obliged to leave Rome, and surrender the command of the army. On his return to France he published a justificatory statement, addressed to his comrades, but neither they nor the public accepted it; and his annoyance was increased when Bonaparte started for Egypt without replying to a letter which he wrote him on the subject.

However, when war again broke out with the coalition formed by England, Russia, and Austria, Masséna's military talents could not well be spared, and the Directory lost no time in putting him in command of the force to which the defence of Switzerland was to be entrusted. After some considerable successes he was beaten with loss by the Austrians, in consequence of an over-hasty attack on the defile of Feldkirch. At the same time the Army of the Rhine, under Jourdan, was defeated by the Archduke Charles at Stockach, and that of Italy, at Novi, by Souvaroff, General Joubert being killed. The Austrians were threatening Alsace and Lorraine; Souvaroff was crossing the St. Gothard into Switzerland; and France, on the point of being invaded in two quarters, felt that her only hope was in Masséna, nor was her hope disappointed.

Bernadotte and the Directory impatiently sent messenger after messenger with orders to Masséna to give battle;[1] but he, knowing that the defeat of his army would mean irretrievable ruin to the country, allowed no threats of dismissal to move him. Like Fabius or Catinat, he would not strike till he could strike decisively, taking advantage of some opportunity when he might for a moment have the superiority. The moment came when the incapable General Korsakoff had imprudently advanced on Zurich with 50,000 Russians and Bavarians, there to await Souvaroff, who was bringing 55,000 men from Italy. Flinging himself like a lion on Korsakoff before Souvaroff could

[1] [See p. 18.]

come up, Masséna surprised him in his camp at Zurich, beat him, and broke up his troops, driving them with immense loss to the Rhine. Then moving upon Souvaroff he defeated him as he had done his lieutenant. In these engagements 30,000 of the enemy were killed or taken, fifteen stand of colours and sixty guns captured, the independence of Switzerland confirmed, and France saved from invasion. Masséna's fame was never so high nor so honourable, and he and his army were thrice thanked by the Legislature.

Meanwhile the Government and the country, torn by factions, were throwing on each other the responsibility alike for internal disorder and reverses abroad. The Directory was tottering under the contempt of the public, and it was clear that things could not go on in the present fashion. Then came the 18th Brumaire, and Bonaparte as First Consul headed the new Government. Masséna, a nullity in politics, took no hand in this revolution, and had no great love for the new state of things, but accepted the command of the Army of Italy, which my father, as senior general of division, had held momentarily on the death of General Championnet. So careless had the Directory been that Masséna found his army in utter misery. I have already mentioned the efforts which he made to put the troops on a good footing in face of the destitution which then prevailed along the Genoese coast; and I need not tell that part of my story over again. I will merely say that by his courage, physical and moral, and his knowledge of the art of war, Masséna covered himself with glory. He again saved France from invasion, when by the obstinacy of his defence of Genoa, he allowed the First Consul time to concentrate at Dijon the reserve army with which he crossed the Alps, and beat the Austrians at Marengo. After that victory, the command of the army was left in Masséna's hands, but the old complaints soon broke out again. Remonstrances were heard from all sides, requisitions were levied on various pretexts, and yet the troops were not paid. On hearing of the state of affairs, the First Consul suddenly, and without explanation, removed Masséna from the command. Returning then into private life he showed his dissatisfaction by refusing to vote for Bonaparte's appointment as Consul for life, nor would he show himself at the new court. None the less the First Consul gave him a sword of honour, inscribed with all the victories in which he had borne a share. Also when he seized the imperial crown, he included Masséna in his first list of marshals, and named him Grand Cordon of the Legion of Honour. On this Masséna's

opposition ceased; he voted for the Empire, and attended the ceremonies of consecration and coronation at the Tuileries.

When France was in 1805 threatened for the third time by a coalition, the duty fell to Masséna of defending North Italy against the Archduke Charles. He not only saved Lombardy, but he attacked the enemy, and drove him beyond the Tagliamento; penetrating even to Carniola, where, by forcing the archduke to halt, and face him every day, he delayed him till he was too late to save Vienna, or join the Russian army which was beaten at Austerlitz. The Emperor, however, did not seem to appreciate Masséna's services in this campaign very highly. He accused him of not acting with his wonted vigour—but this did not prevent him from being shortly sent to conquer the kingdom of Naples.

In a month the French had occupied the whole country, except the fortress of Gaeta, and this Masséna took after a vigorously sustained siege. During his attack on that town, he experienced a very keen annoyance, which he never got over. An immense sum, which, he asserted, belonged to him, was confiscated by the Emperor. The story is curious enough to be worth telling.

Under the conviction that the best way to compel the English to sue for peace was to destroy their commerce by forbidding the importation of their goods into the Continent, Napoleon used to have these goods seized and burnt in every country subject to his authority; that is, in more than half of Europe. But the love of gold is powerful and trade is cunning; and thus a system of smuggling without risk had been devised. The method was that arrangements were made with English merchants under which they sent out vessels to be captured by our privateers, who brought them into some of the numerous ports between Pomerania and the Bay of Naples which were occupied by our troops. The next act was to unload the packages and land them so as to escape confiscation; but this had already been provided for. The extent of coast line being too great to be watched throughout by regular preventive officers, the duty was done by soldiers under the orders of the general in command of the kingdom or province. An authorisation from one of these was sufficient to pass in the bales of goods, and after this the merchants dealt with the 'protector.' This was called a 'licence.'[1] This new style of trade began as early

[1] [Not quite the same, apparently, as the so-called 'system of licences' by which Napoleon modified his 'Continental system.']

as 1806, when Bernadotte was occupying Hamburg and part of Denmark. That marshal acquired by this means considerable sums, and whenever he wished to testify his satisfaction with any person, he would grant him a licence, and the receiver would sell it to some merchant. This practice gradually extended, and even reached the Emperor's court, where chamberlains and ladies-in-waiting got the ministers to give them licences. It was kept from Napoleon's knowledge, but he found it out or suspected it. In order, however, not to interfere too abruptly with the habits of the conquered countries, he tolerated the abuse outside France, provided that it was carried on with secrecy; but strange to say of so great a man, as soon as he learned that anyone had carried his illicit games too far, he made him disgorge. Thus, on hearing that the commissary Michaux, head of the administrative department in Bernadotte's army, had lost 300,000 francs at one sitting in a gambling house at Paris, he ordered an aide-de-camp to write to him saying that the 'Invalides' was in want of cash, and bidding him pay up 300,000 francs. Michaux did so without loss of time, out of his profits on licences.

You may suppose that Masséna had not been behindhand in this business. In partnership with General Solignac, his chief of staff, he flooded every port in the kingdom of Naples with licences. The Emperor, hearing that he had deposited 3,000,000 with a banker at Leghorn, and General Solignac 600,000 at the same time, wrote to the marshal, asking for the loan of 1,000,000, and requesting 200,000 from the chief of the staff; just a third of the profits which each had made, so that you see he did not shear them too close. But at sight of this new kind of draft, Masséna, shrieking as though his bowels were being torn out, replied to Napoleon that he was the poorest of the marshals, had a numerous family to maintain, and was over head and ears in debt; he regretted, therefore, that he could not send him anything. General Solignac made a similar answer, and both were congratulating themselves on having thus taken in the Emperor, when the son of the Leghorn banker arrived post-haste, announcing that the inspector of the French treasury had called on his father, escorted by the commissary of police and several gendarmes, ordered the cash book to be handed over to him, and given a receipt for the 3,600,000 francs paid in by the marshal and General Solignac, adding that this sum belonged to the army and had been entrusted on deposit to those two personages. The Emperor, he said, ordered it to be remitted at once, either in specie or nego-

tiable bills, and the receipts given to Masséna and Solignac might be cancelled. The seizure had been made in due legal form, and the banker, who, indeed, lost nothing by it, was powerless to oppose it. It is difficult to conceive the fury of Masséna on hearing that his fortune had just been snatched away from him. He fell ill, but did not venture to address any remonstrance to the Emperor, who was at that time in Poland and summoned him thither. After the Peace of Tilsit the title of Duke of Rivoli and a pension of 300,000 francs were the reward of his services, but they never consoled him for what he had lost at Leghorn. In spite of his cautious habits he was heard sometimes to cry: 'I was fighting in his service, and he was cruel enough to take away my little savings which I had invested at Leghorn.'[1]

I have already related the glorious part which the marshal took in the campaign of 1809. To reward his conduct at the battles of Essling and Wagram, the Emperor made him Prince of Essling with a further pension of 500,000 francs, in addition to the 300,000 which he had as Duke of Rivoli, and 200,000 as marshal and commander-in-chief. The new-made prince did not increase his expenditure by a halfpenny.

The campaigns in Spain and Portugal were Masséna's last, and, as I have related, they were not fortunate. His mind was not what it was, so that these two campaigns added nothing to his glory, but rather diminished his reputation as a general, and the 'spoilt child of victory' experienced reverses when he might and ought to have been victorious.

Masséna was lean and spare, below the middle height; he had a highly expressive Italian face. The bad points in his character were want of candour, a tendency to bear malice, harshness and avarice. He had much natural ability, but his adventurous youth and low origin never gave him a chance of studying, and he was totally lacking in what is called cultivation. He was a born general; his courage and tenacity did the rest. In the best days of his military career he saw accurately, decided promptly, and never let himself be cast down by reverses. As he grew old he pushed caution to the point of timidity, in fear of compromising the reputation he had earned. He hated reading, and thus had no knowledge of what had been written about war; it was an inspiration with him, and Napoleon

[1] [General Lamarque, in his memoirs, relates how he had the unpleasant task of announcing to Masséna that his millions were confiscated. The scene took place at night in the Palazzo Acton.]

judged him rightly when he said in his memoirs that when Masséna arrived on the field of battle he did not know what he should do, and circumstances decided him.

It is a mistake to represent Masséna, as some have done, as a stranger to flattery, speaking the truth to the Emperor, frankly, and even, indeed, a little brusquely. Under his rough hide Masséna was a cunning courtier. The following was a curious instance of this. One day the Emperor, accompanied by several marshals, among them Masséna, was shooting in the forest of Fontainebleau, and fired at a pheasant. The shot, badly aimed, went in Masséna's direction, and one pellet destroyed his left eye. No one but the Emperor had fired at that moment, and he was certainly the involuntary author of the accident; but Masséna, realising that his eye was gone and it would do him no good to call attention to the clumsiness which had been the cause of his wound, while the Emperor would be grateful to him for diverting attention from himself, attacked Prince Berthier, who had not yet fired, for his reckless shooting. Napoleon and all those present quite understood this courtier-like discretion, and every attention was paid to Masséna by his master.

With all his avarice, the conqueror of Zurich would have given half his fortune to have been born in France, and not on the left bank of the Var. He disliked nothing so much as the Italian termination of his name. He always wrote *e* for *a* in his signature, and when he spoke to his eldest son called him Massène. But the public never accepted the change, and in spite of him who had made it famous the name of Masséna prevailed.

The campaign in Portugal affected Masséna's health so much that he was obliged to rest and recruit at Nice. He passed the whole of 1812 there, but when Napoleon, on his return from Russia, found it necessary to use all his resources, considering that Masséna's name might yet be of service, he employed him as governor of the 8th military division. When the allies invaded France in 1814, Masséna, who had, indeed, few troops at his disposal, did nothing to check their advance. On April 15 he made his submission to the Duke of Angoulême, who created him commander of the order of St. Louis, but did not make him a peer of France, on the plea that he was born a foreigner and had not been naturalised, as if the victories of Rivoli and Zurich, the defence of Genoa, and a whole list of glorious battles in the cause of France were not as valid as any papers of naturalisation. The affront thus

done to Masséna produced a very bad effect on public opinion and that of the army, and had as much to do as anything with the natural irritation against Louis XVIII.'s Government and the consequent return of the Emperor. When he landed on March 1, 1815, and marched towards Paris at the head of a thousand grenadiers, Masséna was taken by surprise and much perplexed by the unforeseen event. He tried to stem the torrent by collecting some regiments of the line, and calling out the National Guard of Marseilles; but on learning that the Duke of Angoulême had been forced to capitulate at La Palud, Masséna sent his son to Louis XVIII. to let him know that he must not count on him any longer. Rallying to the Imperial Government, he hoisted the tricolor flag on April 10 throughout his division, and locked up the Prefect of the Var, who was still for holding out. By this conduct Masséna satisfied neither side; the Emperor summoned him to Paris, and gave him a pretty cold reception.

When Napoleon committed the immense blunder of abdicating a second time in consequence of the battle of Waterloo, the Chamber of Representatives, which he had made the mistake of summoning before joining the army, seized the power and named a provisional government. Its first act was to assign to Masséna the command of the National Guard of Paris. He was too infirm to be able to perform the duties in person, but they wished to have a name which might stimulate the civil inhabitants and induce them to aid the army in the defence of the capital. Fouché's intrigues sowed discord among the members of the provisional government, and the plans of defence having been submitted to a military committee Masséna gave the opinion that Paris could not resist. Consequently an armistice was concluded, and the French army retired behind the Loire and was then disbanded. To punish Masséna for having deserted his cause, Louis XVIII. included him among Marshal Ney's judges, in the hope that, under the influence of personal dislike, he would condemn his unhappy colleague and thus stain his own illustrious name. He attempted, however, to decline, giving as a reason the disagreement which had existed between himself and Ney in Portugal. When this plea was rejected he joined that portion of the court which voted for sending Ney before the chamber of peers. They hoped thus to save him; but they would have done better if they had had the courage to try him themselves and acquit him. When Ney had been condemned by the peers and shot, so far from appeasing the rage of the royalist faction, his blood made them

implacable, and they soon began to persecute Masséna himself. The people of Marseilles, whose benefactor he had been, denounced him before the Chamber of Deputies for peculation. There was no ground for the accusation, for he had been guilty of no exactions in Provence, and so the majority of the 'ideal' chamber, celebrated as it was for its hatred towards the famous men of the Empire, rejected the petition of the Marseilles people with contempt. It was at this sitting that Manuel, since become famous, first came into notice by his warm defence of Masséna. From that time onwards the marshal lived in retirement at his château of Rueil, and ended his glorious career in misfortune and solitude on April 4, 1817. He was fifty-nine years old.

When he died he had not yet received from the Government his new marshal's baton, and, as it is the custom to place this on a marshal's coffin, his son-in-law, General Reille, requested Clarke, Duke of Feltre, the Minister of War, to forward it. But Clarke had become a furious legitimist, and made no reply to this fair request. Then General Reille let the court know that if the marshal's baton was not sent for his father-in-law's funeral, he would place conspicuously on the coffin the one which the Emperor had given him in former days, whereupon the Government agreed to send the emblem.

I have noted many blemishes in the life of this famous warrior, but they are covered by his renown and his signal services to France, and Masséna's memory will go down to posterity as that of one of the greatest captains of an age so fertile in illustrious soldiers.

CHAPTER LXI.

I BEGAN the year 1812 at Paris with my wife and our respective families; but my happiness was disturbed by the thought of my approaching departure to join the first regiment of chasseurs, to which I had been appointed as major only. My regret at not having obtained promotion to colonel was somewhat lessened when I was paying my respects on New Year's Day at the Tuileries, and the Emperor sent for me to his private room. I found there the Count of Lobau, who, in this matter, as always, did me much kindness. Napoleon appeared, and was very affable, saying that he had intended to give me a regiment, that personal considerations had induced him to make Barain a colonel, which with Pelet and Casabianca made three colonels from Masséna's staff, and he did not think he ought to appoint a fourth. He added that, though he could not give me the nominal command of a regiment, he was going to give it me practically—that, namely, of the 23rd Mounted Chasseurs. The colonel, M. de la Nougarède, suffered so much from gout that he could scarcely ride. 'But,' continued the Emperor, 'he is an excellent officer, and served his first campaigns valiantly with me; I have much liking and esteem for him, and as he has begged me to allow him to try another campaign, I do not wish to take his regiment from him. However, I understand that that fine regiment is in a somewhat ticklish state, so I am sending you as his coadjutor. You will be working in your own interest—for if the colonel's health improves I shall make him a general. Otherwise I shall put him in the gendarmerie, and in either case you will be colonel. So I repeat that you will be working in your own interest.' This promise restored my hopes, and I was making ready to start for my new destination when my leave was prolonged till the end of March, a favour that was none the less agreeable because I had not asked for it.

The 23rd Chasseurs was then in Swedish Pomerania, and, wishing to join before the end of my leave, I left Paris on March 15. I gave a place in my carriage to M. Durbach, nephew of Marshal Mortier, a lieutenant in the same regiment.

My old servant, Woirland, had asked leave to stay in Spain, hoping to make his fortune in a canteen, and I had replaced him when I left Salamanca by a Pole named Lorenz Schilkowski. He had been an Austrian uhlan and was not lacking in wits, but was a drunkard like all the Poles, and, unlike the soldiers of that nation, as cowardly as a hare. But, besides his native tongue, Lorenz spoke French a little, German and Russian perfectly, and in these respects was exceedingly valuable to me for a war in the north.

As we were starting at night from the post-house of Kaiserslautern, the postilion upset my carriage into a quagmire and it was broken. Nobody was hurt, but M. Durbach and I both said: 'A bad omen for soldiers who will soon be in presence of the enemy.' However, after a day spent in repairing damages, we were able to proceed, but the springs and wheels were so much injured that they broke six times during the journey, causing us much delay, and making us do several leagues on foot in the snow. At length we reached the shores of the Baltic, and found the 23rd Chasseurs in garrison at Stralsund and Greifswald.

I found Colonel de la Nougarède an excellent man, cultivated and capable, but so prematurely aged by gout that he had to travel constantly in a carriage—a melancholy way for the commander of a light cavalry regiment to move. He received me most kindly, and after explaining to me his reasons for remaining with the regiment, he showed me a letter in which the Count of Lobau informed him of the reasons which led the Emperor to place me with him. So far from being hurt by this, he regarded it as an additional kindness on the Emperor's part, and as holding out hopes that he would soon be appointed general, or commander of gendarmerie. He expected, with my help, to be able at least to take some part in the campaign, and obtain what he desired at the first review held by the Emperor. Therefore, to associate me in the command more than my position as senior major would naturally imply, he assembled the officers, and in their presence delegated his powers provisionally to me, bidding each obey me without reference to him, since his weak health often made it impossible for him to keep sufficiently near the regiment for him to command it in person. A general order to this effect was drawn up, and from that day I became in everything but rank a regimental commander, and the regiment soon became accustomed to regard me as its actual commander. Since that time I have commanded army cavalry regiments, either as colonel or as a general officer, and I have been for a long time inspector of that arm; but I

can safely say that, if I ever saw a regiment in as good condition as the 23rd Chasseurs, I never saw a better. It was not that it contained men of surpassing merit, such as I have occasionally known in other regiments, but if there was no man in the 23rd of extraordinary ability, there was not one who was not thoroughly up to his duty. All were on the same level of courage and zeal: there was no weak spot. The officers, highly intelligent and sufficiently well trained, were all of excellent character, and lived together as true brethren in arms. It was the same with the non-commissioned officers, and the troopers followed their good example. Nearly all were veterans of Austerlitz, Jena, Friedland, and Wagram, and most had three, or at least two, good-conduct stripes; those who had only one were a small minority. They were a splendid lot of men from Normandy, Alsace, Lorraine, and Franche-Comté, provinces well known for military spirit and love of horses. General Bourcier, when charged with the general remounting, had been so struck with the stature of the men that he had given them larger and stouter horses than the chasseurs usually have, so that this regiment was called the carbiniers of the light cavalry. Their long stay in Germany had brought men and horses into perfect condition; and when I took the command of the regiment it had an effective strength of over 1,000 fighting men, well-disciplined, calm, and able to hold their tongues, especially in presence of the enemy.

I got my horses from the island of Rügen, where there is a good breed, and from Rosbock, seven in all. This was none too many, for war with Russia was clearly imminent. I had foreseen it since the summer of 1811, when I noticed how the Emperor was withdrawing men from the Peninsula to reinforce his Guard, and while staying in Paris my convictions of it had been strengthened. Rumours of strained relations—vanishing during the diversions of the winter, but always reviving in a more definite form—finally grew stronger, till they reached almost the point of certainty in consequence of a serious occurrence, which, as it was discussed throughout Europe, I ought to relate here.

The Emperor Alexander had been brought up with a young Russian noble called Czernicheff, whom, when he came to the throne, he had appointed his aide-de-camp. In 1809, when Alexander, as Napoleon's ally, was pretending to be at war with Austria, we saw Colonel Czernicheff arrive at Vienna, ostensibly charged with maintaining good relations between Napoleon and Alexander; but with the secret duty of keeping his sovereign informed of our successes and reverses, so that

he might maintain or dissolve his alliance with France, as circumstances indicated. Alexander's favourite was kindly received by Napoleon, and was always by his side during the period preceding the battle of Essling, but when the result of that sanguinary action appeared doubtful and cannon-balls began to drop among the imperial staff, M. de Czernicheff rode off out of the way of danger, and two days after the battle started for St. Petersburg, no doubt to relate the failure of our attempt. Napoleon regarded his conduct as very unseemly, and let fall sharp gibes upon the courage of the Russian colonel. After the peace, however, Czernicheff came often to Paris, and, being handsome, amiable, and exquisitely polite, was well received, not only at court but also in the drawing-rooms of the best society. He never talked politics, and had the reputation of being much in favour with ladies. Towards the end of 1811, however, when the rumours of war revived, the police had information that the Russian colonel, while feigning to be devoted to pleasure, was concerned in suspicious dealings connected with politics. He was carefully watched, and it soon became known that he had frequent interviews with M. X——, an official in the War Office, whose special duty it was to draw up the 'states' presented every ten days to the Emperor, showing the strength and condition of every arm in the service. Not only was Czernicheff recognised when walking after midnight in the darkest parts of the Champs Elysées with the French official, but he was often seen to enter X——'s lodgings dressed in shabby clothes, and stay there several hours. This intimacy on the part of a person of high rank with a poor War Office clerk was clear proof that the latter was in the pay of the former for the betrayal of state secrets, and the Emperor gave orders to arrest M. de Czernicheff. He was, however, warned, it is said by a woman, and leaving Paris at once travelled by the least-frequented roads, and reached the Rhine frontier, avoiding Mainz and Cologne, whither orders for his seizure had been telegraphed. As for the poor clerk, he was arrested at the very moment when he was counting a sum of 300,000 francs in bank notes, the price of his treason. Compelled by the evidence to admit his crime, he stated that another War Office clerk had sold documents to the Russian colonel. He, too, was arrested, and both were tried, condemned, and shot. They died cursing Czernicheff, who, they said, had sought them out in their garrets and seduced them by the sight of a heap of gold which he kept increasing as long as they had any hesitation. The Emperor caused a virulent article against M. de Czernicheff to

be published in all the French papers, adding remarks which, indirect as they were, must have deeply wounded the Russian Emperor, for they recalled the fact that Alexander had never punished the murderers of his father Paul.

After this there could be no further question about war, and although it was not yet declared, open preparations for it were made on both sides. Czernicheff's conduct, although blamed in words by everybody, yet found specially among diplomatists some who approved it in secret, on the strength of the famous adage: *Salus patriæ prima lex.* On this point too, they recalled a little-known anecdote which I had from Marshal Lannes, proving that while Napoleon punished, and rightly, Frenchmen who sold their country's secrets to the enemy, he was accustomed to corrupt foreign officials who could furnish him with information likely to be useful in war. The story, as Lannes told it me at Vienna in 1809, was as follows.

When hostilities between France and Austria were on the point of breaking out, the Archduke Charles was anonymously informed that a certain general, whom he valued highly, and had just appointed deputy-chief of his staff, had sold himself to General Andréossi, the French ambassador, and had frequent interviews with him at night in an empty house in the Leopoldstadt, the number of which was given. So high was the archduke's esteem for the general, that he treated the accusation, brought by a person who dared not name himself, as a foul calumny, and took no steps to verify it. Just when the French ambassador, having asked for his passports, was about to leave Vienna within forty-eight hours, a second anonymous letter came, informing the archduke that his deputy-chief of the staff, after working alone in his room, where the 'states' of the army were kept, was to have that night a final meeting with General Andréossi. Wishing to put out of his mind any suspicion which he feared might linger against an officer whom he liked, the archduke resolved to establish his innocence for himself. Dressing, therefore, in ordinary civil clothes, and accompanied only by his senior aide-de-camp, he took his stand after midnight in the darkest part of the side-street where the house in question stood. After a few moments' waiting, they saw a man, in whom, though disguised, they were grieved to recognise the deputy-chief of the staff. At a signal from him, the door was opened; and a few seconds later, General Andréossi entered in the same manner. The interview lasted some hours, during which the disgusted archduke, who could no longer doubt as to the treason of his subordinate, waited patiently before the

house. At length the door opened, and General Andréossi came out with the Austrian general, meeting the archduke full in the face. He said aloud, 'Good evening, Mr. French Ambassador,' then disdaining to address any words of reproach to his deputy-chief of the staff, he merely turned a dark lantern on to him. But the aide-de-camp, less cautious, tapped the wretch on the shoulder, observing: 'Look at that infamous traitor, General So-and-so, who will be degraded to-morrow!' The ambassador slunk away without a word. As for the Austrian general, caught *in flagranti delicto*, and knowing what he had to expect, he went home and blew his brains out. The tragedy was studiously hushed up by the Austrian Government, and made little noise; it was given out that the deputy-chief of the staff had died from a sudden apoplectic seizure. He appears to have received two millions from the French ambassador.

One curious feature about Colonel Czernicheff's business was, that at the moment when Napoleon was complaining of the means employed by him to obtain the 'states' of our armies, General Lauriston, our ambassador at St. Petersburg, was buying, not only the most accurate information about the position and strength of the Russian army, but also the engraved copperplates from which the great map of the Russian Empire had been printed. In spite of the vast difficulties in the transport of this heavy mass of metal, the treason was so well arranged, and so handsomely paid for, that these plates were abstracted from the archives of the Russian Government and carried into France without their disappearance being discovered, either by the police or by the customs officials. As soon as the plates reached Paris, the War Office, after substituting French for Russian characters in the names of places and rivers, had this fine map printed, and the Emperor ordered a copy to be sent to all the generals and commanders of light cavalry regiments. Thus I received one, which I succeeded, with some difficulty, in saving during the retreat, as it forms a large roll. The map contained all Russia; even Siberia and Kamschatka, which considerably amused those who received it. Very few brought theirs back, but I have got mine.

CHAPTER LXII.

Leaving Dresden on July 29,[1] the Emperor went towards Poland, by way of Dantzig and Prussia Proper. His troops were crossing this country at the same time, and he reviewed them as he came up with them. The 23rd Mounted Chasseurs was brigaded with the 24th. This brigade, commanded by General Castex, formed part of the 2nd army corps, under Marshal Oudinot. I had known General Castex for some time; he was an excellent man, and I got on perfectly with him throughout the campaign. Marshal Oudinot had seen me at the siege of Genoa, as well as in Austria, in 1809, and he treated me with much kindness. On June 20 the 2nd corps was ordered to halt at Insterburg, to be reviewed by the Emperor. These military solemnities were always awaited with impatience by those persons who hoped to share in the favours which Napoleon distributed on such occasions. I was of the number, believing myself all the more certain to be appointed colonel of the regiment that, besides the promises which the Emperor had made to me, General Castex and Marshal Oudinot had told me that they were going to recommend me officially, and that they believed that M. de la Nougarède was going to be placed, with the rank of general, at the head of one of the grand remount depôts which would be established in rear of the army. But the same fatality which had so frequently postponed the delivery of my commission as major pursued me afresh in obtaining that of colonel. The reviews involved severe examinations by the Emperor of the regimental commanders, especially on the eve of a campaign. Besides the usual questions as to the numerical strength in men and horses, he used to address a heap of unexpected queries which people were not always prepared to answer. For instance, 'How many men have you had from such a department in the last two years? How many carbines from Tulle or from Charleville? How many Norman horses have you? How many Breton? How many German? How many men of that troop have got three stripes? How

[1] [So in the original, but July is obviously an error for May.]

many two, or one? What is the average age of your soldiers? Of your officers? Of your horses?' and so on. These questions, always put in a short, imperative tone, accompanied with a piercing glance, put many colonels out of countenance; and yet woe to him who hesitated to answer: he got a bad mark in Napoleon's mind. I had prepared myself so well that I had an answer for everything, and the Emperor, after complimenting me on the fine condition of the regiment, would probably have named me colonel, and promoted M. de la Nougarède general. But just then the latter, with his legs wrapped in flannel, had got hoisted on his horse, to follow the movements of his regiment at a distance, while I commanded in his place. Hearing his name, he came up to Napoleon and irritated him by an untimely request on behalf of an officer, a relation of his, who was unworthy of any interest. This request raised a storm of which I experienced the recoil. Napoleon flew into a violent rage, ordered the gendarmes to expel the officer in question from the army, and galloped away, leaving La Nougarède confounded; so he was not made general. Marshal Oudinot having followed the Emperor to inquire his orders with regard to the 23rd Chasseurs, his Majesty replied, 'Let Major Marbot continue to command it.' Before I obtained colonel's rank I was to be wounded again, and that severely.

To do M. de la Nougarède justice, I must say that he expressed in the frankest manner his regret at having been the involuntary cause of the delay in my promotion. I was much concerned by the worthy man's awkward position; he feared that he had lost the Emperor's confidence, and at the same time his infirmity prevented him from recovering it by good conduct in battle.

I had been fortunate enough on the review day to obtain all the promotions and decorations which I had asked for on behalf of my officers and men; and, as the gratitude of these favours always falls upon the commander who has secured them, my influence in the regiment increased considerably, and mitigated my regret at not having been promoted to the rank of which I was discharging the functions. At this time I received letters from Marshal Masséna and the maréchale, the former commending to me M. Renique, the latter her son Prosper. I was touched by this attention, and accepted both as captains in my regiment; but Prosper Masséna never came to Russia; nor could he, indeed, have borne the climate.

We were now close upon the Russian frontier, and once more about to see the Niemen, which had been our limit in

1807. The army was arranged in the following order. The Austrians, under Schwarzenburg, on the extreme right; to his left between Bielostock and Grodno, two army corps under King Jerome, and next to them Eugène Beauharnais; the centre faced Kowno, consisting of 220,000 combatants, under Murat, Ney, Oudinot, Lefebvre, and Bessières; the Emperor being with it in person. Macdonald, with 35,000 Prussians, formed, as I have said, the left wing at Tilsit. Behind the Niemen was the Russian army, 400,000 strong, commanded by the Emperor Alexander, or rather by Benningsen. It was divided into three principal corps under Bagration, Barclay de Tolly, and Wittgenstein.

Four historians have written on the campaign of 1812. The first was Labaume, a mapping engineer—a member, that is, of a corps which, although part of the military establishment, never went into action, and only accompanied the army for surveying purposes. He never commanded troops, and had no practical knowledge of the art of war. His judgments are, therefore, usually incorrect, even when not unjust to the French army. As, however, Labaume's work appeared soon after the restoration of Louis XVIII., party spirit, as well as the desire for information about the terrible events of the Russian campaign, gave it some celebrity, increased by the fact that no one took the trouble to refute it, and thus the public got into the way of regarding its accuracy as unquestioned.

The second narrative is that of Colonel Boutourlin, aide-de-camp to the Emperor Alexander. This work, although written by an enemy, contains much sensible criticism, and if the author is not always strictly accurate it is for want of documents, for he has impartially done all that was in his power to discover the truth, and is in general esteem as having written like an honourable man.

Labaume's libellous work was already forgotten when General the Count de Ségur published, in 1825, a third history of the campaign of 1812. More than one survivor of that campaign was distressed by the spirit of the work, and even our enemies called it a military romance. It had nevertheless a great success, both from the purity and elegance of its style, and on account of the reception which it had from the court and the ultra-royalist party. The old officers of the Empire, feeling that they were attacked, charged General Gourgaud to reply. He did it successfully, but in too bitter a fashion, and a duel resulted between him and M. de Ségur, who was wounded. It must be owned that if the latter shows

little favour to Napoleon and his army, General Gourgaud is too flattering, for he will see none of the Emperor's mistakes. I certainly have no intention of writing the history afresh, but I think I ought to record the principal facts, since they form an essential part of the period in which I have lived, and in many cases are connected with my fortunes. I wish, however, in this brief summary to avoid the contrary extremes into which Ségur and Gourgaud fell. I will neither detract nor flatter: I will tell the truth.

At the moment when the two mighty empires were about to clash together, England, Russia's natural ally, was bound to make every effort to assist her to repel invasion. By lavishing gold [1] on the Turkish Ministers the English Cabinet succeeded in establishing peace between Russia and the Porte, thus enabling the former to call home her army, then on the frontier of Turkey, which army played an important part in the war. England had also arranged a peace between the Emperor Alexander and France's natural ally, Sweden, on whom Napoleon had all the more right to count, since Bernadotte had just been appointed Crown Prince, and was governing the country in the name of the old King, his adoptive father. I have already told you [2] the curious concourse of circumstances by which Bernadotte had been raised to the position of heir-presumptive to the Swedish crown. After all his assurances that he would remain a Frenchman at heart, the new prince let himself be inveigled or intimidated by the English, who could, indeed, easily have overthrown him. He sacrificed the true interests of his new country when he let himself be swayed by England and allied himself with Russia, as he did in a meeting with the Emperor Alexander at the Finnish town of Abo. The Russians had just conquered that province, and promised to indemnify Sweden by the cession of Norway, which was to be torn from Denmark, the too faithful ally of France. Thus Bernadotte, instead of relying on our army to get back his provinces, sanctioned these encroachments by placing himself among the allies of Russia. If he would have acted with us the geographical position of Sweden would have served our common interests admirably.

So far, however, the new Crown Prince did not definitely

[1] [This, of course, is 'common form.' English gold had less to do with the Treaty of Bucharest than the energy and ability of young Mr. Stratford Canning, and the English Cabinet took very little hand in it.]

[2] [See p. 191.]

take sides against us ; he waited till he could judge the chances of victory, and did not declare himself till the next year. Deprived of support from Turkey and Sweden, Napoleon's only available allies towards the north were the Poles: a turbulent race, whose forefathers, when they formed an independent state, could not agree, and from whom no moral or physical support could be hoped for. Indeed, Lithuania and the other provinces of the former Poland had in their forty years' subjection to Russia almost wholly lost the remembrance of their ancient constitution, and regarded themselves as Russians of old standing. The sons of the nobles, accustomed to enter the Czar's armies, were not likely to attach themselves to the French. With regard to those Poles who were subject to Austria and Prussia, they marched against Russia, but only under the flag of their present sovereigns, with no enthusiasm for Napoleon. The grand duchy of Warsaw, added to Saxony by the Treaty of Tilsit, alone retained a trace of national feeling and attached itself to France ; but what could so small a state do ? Still Napoleon, confident alike in his might and in his genius, resolved to cross the Niemen. On June 23, wearing the cap and cloak of a Pole in his guard, he examined the banks ; and that evening at 10 P.M. ordered the passage to begin. Three bridges of boats had been thrown across opposite Kowno, and our troops occupied that town without resistance.

CHAPTER LXIII.

When the sun rose on June 24 we witnessed a most imposing spectacle. On the highest point near the left bank were seen the Emperor's tents. Around them, the slopes of every hill and the valleys between were gay with men and horses flashing with arms. This mass of 250,000 combatants was rolling on in three large columns with the most perfect regularity towards the three bridges which crossed the river, and over which the various corps were proceeding to the right bank, each to advance in the direction prescribed to it. On the same day our troops crossed the Niemen at other points, near Grodno, Pilony, and Tilsit.

From a 'state' furnished to me by General Gourgaud, and scored all over with notes in Napoleon's hand, it appears that the army which crossed the Niemen amounted to 325,000 men actually present, of whom 155,000 were French; and 984 guns. The 2nd corps, of which my regiment formed part, crossed by the first bridge on June 23, and marched direct for Janowo. It was intensely hot, and towards night a heavy storm came on, with floods of rain. The army did not, however, as has been stated, regard this as a bad omen; soldiers are well used to hail and thunder in summer time. Moreover, the Russians had also their bad omen, for on the same night the Emperor Alexander nearly lost his life during a ball at Wilna, by the floor of a room giving way under his chair, just at the time when the first French detachment was landing on Russian soil. However, the storm made the weather very cold, and our horses, who had to eat wet grass and sleep on muddy ground, suffered a good deal. We also lost some thousands of men from acute colic.

Beyond Kowno flows a small stream called the Wilia, the bridge over which had been cut by the enemy; and the storm having swollen it, Oudinot's leading scouts were stopped. The Emperor came up just as I reached the spot with my regiment. He ordered the Polish lancers to sound the ford, and one man was drowned. I took down his name, which was Tzinski. If

I emphasise this detail it is because the accident to the Polish lancer at the passage of the Wilia has been vastly exaggerated.[1]

Meanwhile the Russians were retiring, and the French army soon occupied Wilna, the capital of Lithuania. Near this town a cavalry action took place, in which Octave de Ségur, elder brother of the general and historian, was captured when leading a squadron of the 8th Hussars. On the day when the Emperor entered Wilna, Marshal Oudinot's troops encountered the Russian corps under Wittgenstein at Wilkomir, and the first serious engagement of the campaign took place. I had never served under Oudinot, and this beginning confirmed my high opinion of his courage, but still further reduced that which I held of his military talents.

One of the chief faults of the French in time of war is to pass without reason from the most minute caution to unbounded confidence. Thus the Russians having let us cross the Niemen and occupy Wilna unopposed, it became the thing among some officers to say that the enemy would always run away, and nowhere make a stand. Oudinot's staff, and the marshal himself, often vented this opinion, and treated the reports of the peasants as to a great Russian force posted before the little town of Wilkomir as fables. This incredulity was very near being the ruin of us, in this wise. Light cavalry, being the eyes of an army, usually marches in front and on the flank. My regiment then was a short league in advance of the infantry divisions, when, on getting near Wilkomir, without having seen a single enemy's picket I found myself in front of a forest of mighty pines, among which cavalry could easily move in sections, while the branches masked all distant view. Fearing an ambush, I halted the regiment, and sent a single squadron forward to reconnoitre. In a quarter of an hour the captain in command, a very intelligent man, returned with the news that the enemy was present in force. Hastening to the extreme edge of the forest, I saw, a cannon-shot away, the town of Wilkomir, covered by a stream and a hill upon which were drawn up in line 25,000 to 30,000 infantry, with cavalry and artillery. It may seem strange that these troops had thrown out neither grand guards, nor pickets, nor scouts; but when the Russians mean to defend a strong position their way is to let the enemy approach as near as possible without any warning from the fire of skirmishers of the resistance with which he is to meet; and not till his masses are within easy range do they

[1] [*E.g.*, Scott (who follows Ségur), *Life of Napoleon*, chap. lvii.]

open with artillery and musketry, so as to bewilder and throw into confusion the enemy's soldiers. This plan, which perhaps offers advantages, has often resulted well for the Russians; so Wittgenstein was preparing a reception of this sort for us.

Matters seemed to me so serious that, without showing my regiment, I withdrew it into the forest, and hastened off myself to warn Marshal Oudinot of the state of affairs. I found him outside the wood, having dismounted and halted his troops, quietly breakfasting in the middle of his staff. I expected that my report would draw him from his false security; but he received me with an incredulous air, and said, patting my shoulder: 'Oh, come! here has Marbot just found 30,000 men for us to drub!' General Laurencez, his son-in-law and chief of staff, was the only one who believed; he had formerly been aide-de-camp to Augereau, and knew me of old. So he took my part, remarking that when the commander of a regiment says, 'I have seen——,' he ought to be believed; and that to neglect the warnings of light cavalry officers was to run a great risk. This made the marshal reflect, and he was beginning to ask me further questions about the enemy, of whose presence he still seemed to have doubts, when a captain on his staff, M. Duplessis, came up all out of breath, to say that he had been all over the place, and even into the forest, and had not seen a single Russian. Hearing this, the marshal and his staff fell to laughing at my fears, much to my vexation. I contained myself, however, knowing that the truth would soon appear.

Breakfast ended, the march was resumed, and I returned to my regiment at the head of the column. As before, I took it through the wood, for I foresaw what would happen as soon as we emerged in front of the enemy's position. In spite of all I could say Oudinot insisted on following a very broad road cut straight through the forest; but no sooner had he got near the edge of it than the enemy, perceiving the numerous group formed by the staff, opened a rolling fire from their guns, which were placed facing the road so as to enfilade it. The gilded squadron, lately so cheerful, was thrown into disorder. Happily, no man was touched by the balls, but the marshal's horse was killed, as well as those of M. Duplessis and several others. I was well revenged, and to my shame I admit that I found it hard to conceal the satisfaction which I felt at seeing all those who had laughed at my report and treated what I had said about the enemy's presence as mere fancy running in all directions under a storm of shot and jumping the ditches with all their might to take shelter behind the great pines. Good

General Laurencez, whom I had advised to remain in the forest, laughed heartily at the scene. I must do Marshal Oudinot the justice of saying that he was hardly on horseback again when he came to express his regret to me for what had happened at breakfast, and begged me to give him information as to the position of the Russians, and point out the ways by which he could bring his infantry columns through the forest without exposing them too much to artillery fire. Several officers of the 23rd, who had explored the wood with me in the morning, were bidden to guide the divisions. These were received on emerging with a terrible cannonade, which might have been avoided if, warned as we were of the presence of the Russians, we had manœuvred to turn their flank instead of marching straight on their front. Once out of the wood, I was thus compelled to attack the position by the best defended point, and to take the bull by the horns.

At all events, our brave troops attacked the enemy with resolution, and drove him back on all sides, until after two hours' fighting he effected a retreat. This he did not do without danger, for to accomplish it he had to pass through the town and cross a bridge over a stream with steep banks. The operation, always a difficult one when it has to be done fighting, was begun in good order; but our field artillery having come into position on a height commanding the town, its fire soon carried disorder into the enemy's masses, and they fled headlong towards the bridge. After crossing, instead of re-forming their ranks we could see them flying in a crowd over the plains on the opposite bank, their retreat soon turning to a rout. The Toula regiment alone still held its ground at the end of the bridge towards the town. Marshal Oudinot was most anxious to force this passage and complete his victory over the flying troops; but as our infantry columns had barely reached the suburbs, it would take them at least a quarter of an hour to come up before the bridge, and every moment was precious. My regiment, having made a successful charge at the entrance of the town, was now assembled on the promenade not far from the stream. The marshal sent word to me to bring it up at a gallop, and as soon as we reached him he ordered me to charge the battalions which were covering the bridge, cross it, and at once pursue the fugitives on the plain. Experienced soldiers know how hard it is for cavalry to break a brave infantry which defends itself with resolution in the streets of a town. I understood in their full extent the dangers of my task; but it was necessary to obey at once, and, besides, I knew that a regimental commander makes a favourable impression or otherwise on his

troops by his conduct in the first fights. My regiment was composed of brave soldiers. I brought them along at a gallop and charged the Russian grenadiers at their head. They received us bravely with the bayonet; but so impetuous was our rush that they were nevertheless broken at the first shock. Having once pierced the enemy's ranks, my chasseurs, dexterously using their points, did fearful execution. The enemy retired across the bridge, we following so closely that they tried in vain to re-form; they could not succeed in doing so, our troopers being mixed up with them and killing all whom they could reach. The Russian colonel fell dead, and his regiment, losing heart at the loss of their commander, and seeing the French light infantry already at the bridge, laid down their arms. I lost six men killed and about a score wounded, while we captured a colour and 2,000 prisoners.

After the fight I hastened on with my people into the plain, where we took a great number of fugitives, many horses, and several guns. Marshal Oudinot, who had seen the whole affair from the town, came to compliment the regiment. From this day he had a special predilection for it, which it deserved in all respects. I was proud to command such soldiers, and when the marshal informed me that he intended to ask for a colonelcy for me I was quite afraid lest the Emperor might renounce his first intention and give me the first vacant regiment. Things fall out strangely. The action at Wilkomir, where the 23rd covered itself with glory, very nearly became the cause of its destruction later on, because the courage which it had shown on that occasion caused it to be selected for an impracticable operation, of which I shall presently speak.

But let us return to Wilna, where the Emperor was beginning to meet with some of the difficulties which were to wreck his mighty enterprise. The first of these was the organisation of Lithuania. This had to be done in such a way as to attach to us not only the provinces still in Russian operation, but also the duchy of Posen and Galicia, incorporated by treaty in Prussia and Austria, allies whom it was at this moment of such importance to Napoleon to conciliate. The most ardent among the Polish nobility proposed to Napoleon to raise all the provinces and place more than 300,000 men at his disposal as soon as he would officially declare that all the partitions of their country were annulled and the kingdom of Poland reconstituted. But while he saw the advantages which he might derive from this universal levy, the Emperor could not disguise from himself that its first result would be to set him at

war with Prussia and Austria, who, rather than see those fair provinces torn from them, would join forces with the Russians. Above all, however, he feared the unstableness of the Polish nation, who, when they had embroiled him with the three greatest Powers of the North, would perhaps not keep their promises. He answered, therefore, that he would not recognise the kingdom of Poland until the population showed itself worthy of independence by rising against its oppressors. Thus they were revolving in a vicious circle, Napoleon unwilling to recognise Poland until it rose, and the Poles unwilling to act until their nationality was reconstituted. Moreover, what proved that the Emperor's only aim in invading Russia was to re-establish the continental blockade was, that he had made no provision for arming and equipping the troops which the Poles were to raise.

However that may be, some influential noblemen, wishing to force Napoleon's hand, formed themselves at Warsaw into a national Diet, which was joined by a few deputies from different 'circles.' The first act of this assembly was to proclaim the reconstitution and independence of the ancient kingdom of Poland, which patriotic declaration made an immense stir throughout all the provinces, whether Russian, Prussian, or Austrian. For some days people believed in a general rising which would probably have supported Napoleon; but this unreflecting exaltation lasted but a short time, and barely a few hundred Poles came to join us. So quickly did it cool down, that the town and circle of Wilna could not furnish more than twenty men for Napoleon's guard of honour. If the Poles had displayed at that time a fraction of the energy and enthusiasm which they showed in the insurrection of 1830-31, they would perhaps have recovered their independence; but, so far from coming to help the French troops, they refused them the most necessary things, and in the course of this campaign our soldiers had often to take by force the provisions which the inhabitants, and especially the nobles, concealed from us, and yet gave up on their first demand to their persecutors, the Russians. This partiality in favour of our enemies disgusted the French soldiers, and gave rise to some unpleasant scenes, which M. de Ségur calls horrible pillage. But you cannot stop unlucky soldiers, worn out by fatigue, and receiving no rations, from laying hands upon the bread and the animals which they require to feed them.

The necessity of maintaining order compelled the Emperor to appoint prefects and sub-prefects chosen from among the

most enlightened Poles; but their administration was illusory, and did no service to the French army. The apathy of the Lithuanian Poles arose mainly from the attachment of the nobles to the Russian Government, which secured their rights over the peasants, whose enfranchisement by the French they dreaded. For all these Polish nobles, who were for ever talking of liberty, held their peasants in the most brutal serfdom.

Although the massing of French troops on their frontiers must have given the Russians notice of the approaching commencement of hostilities, the passage of the Niemen no less took them by surprise; nor did they oppose it at any point. Their army retreated on the Dwina, on the left bank of which river, at Drissa, they had constructed an immense entrenched camp. The various French corps followed the enemy in all directions. Murat commanded the cavalry of the advanced guard, and came in contact every evening with the Russian rear-guard, but after a slight engagement they would retire by forced marches in the night; nor was it ever possible to bring them to a serious action.

CHAPTER LXIV.

At our very first entry into Russia the enemy had committed the huge blunder of allowing Napoleon to break their line, with the result that the main body of their troops, led by the Emperor Alexander and Barclay, had been thrown back to the Dwina, while the remainder, under Bagration, was eighty leagues distant, near Mir, on the Upper Niemen. Bagration's plan was to rejoin the Emperor by way of Minsk; but Davout, who was guarding that important point, drove him back upon Bobrinsk, where he knew that Jerome Bonaparte with 60,000 men ought to be on the look-out. Nothing but the bungling of Jerome, who had not only misunderstood the instructions of Davout, but also, refusing to recognise the right to command which long and successful experience had given to the marshal, wished to act on his own judgment, saved Bagration from having to surrender. Even so, Davout, following him with his wonted temerity, overtook him on the road to Mohileff, and although he had at the moment only 12,000 men, attacked and beat his force of 36,000. It is true that Bagration was taken by surprise on ground too much enclosed to allow him to bring his whole force into action. Thus pushed back, he crossed the Dnieper low down at Novoï-Bychoff, and being thenceforth safe from Davout's attack, succeeded in rejoining the main Russian army at Smolensk. In the course of his marches and counter-marches to avoid Davout he surprised Bordesoulle's brigade of cavalry, and captured the entire 3rd Regiment of Chasseurs, of which my friend Saint-Mars was colonel.

The capture of Bagration's corps would have had immense results for Napoleon, and his anger against King Jerome for having let him escape was terrible. He ordered him to leave the army on the spot and return to Westphalia. This severe if unavoidable measure produced in the army an effect unfavourable to King Jerome; but was he really most to blame? His chief fault was having thought that his dignity as sovereign was inconsistent with taking instructions from a marshal; but

the Emperor, who knew quite well that the young prince had never in his life set a battalion in the field, nor taken part in the very smallest action, was surely to blame for allowing him to make his start with an army of 60,000 men, and that in such serious circumstances. General Junot replaced Jerome, and it was not long before he too committed an irreparable blunder.

About this time the Emperor of Russia sent to Napoleon, who was still at Wilna, one of his Ministers, Count Balakhoff. The object of this interview has never been known. Some persons supposed that there was talk of an armistice; but they were quickly undeceived by Count Balakhoff's departure, and it was soon known that the English party, which was very influential in the Russian court and army, had taken offence at his mission. Dreading lest any personal intercourse should take place between Alexander and Napoleon, they required that the Emperor of Russia should leave the army and return to St. Petersburg. Alexander agreed to this, but insisted on taking his brother Constantine with him. The Russian generals, when left to themselves and influenced by Wilson,[1] only thought of giving the war such a ferocious character as might terrify the French. With this view they ordered their troops to make a desert behind them by burning the houses and everything which they could not carry away.

On July 15 the columns under Murat, Ney, Montbrun, Nansouty, and Oudinot had reached the Dwina. The last-named, probably misunderstanding the Emperor's orders, made an erratic march, and, descending the Dwina by the left bank, while Wittgenstein's corps was going up it on the opposite side, he appeared before the town of Dünaborg. The fortifications were old and bad, and he hoped to carry the bridge, cross the river, and attack Wittgenstein in rear. But Wittgenstein on leaving Dünaborg had left there a strong garrison, with plenty of artillery. My regiment was, as usual, with the advanced guard, which Oudinot was that day leading in person. Dünaborg stands on the right bank, and as we came up on the left bank we found it defended by a considerable work which acts as a *tête de pont* to the bridge, which connects the place itself with its outworks beyond the river, here very broad. A quarter of a league from the fortifications, on which Oudinot averred that there were no guns, I espied a Russian battalion, with its left resting on the river, and its front covered by the huts of an abandoned camp—a position in which it was very

[1] [Sir R. Wilson did not join the Russian army till August 14.]

difficult to get at the enemy. The marshal, however, told me to attack them; and, leaving the task of avoiding the huts and passing through the intervals between them to the intelligence of my officers, I gave the word to charge. But hardly had the regiment advanced a few paces, amid a hail of bullets from the Russian infantry, when the artillery, whose existence the marshal had denied, began to thunder from the fortifications. So close were we that the shrapnel passed over our heads before it had time to burst. One of the few round-shot which came with it passed through a fisherman's house, and broke the leg of one of my best trumpeters, who was sounding the charge beside me. I lost several men at this point.

Marshal Oudinot, who had made the serious mistake of attacking a camp of huts protected by cannon and musketry, hoped to dislodge the enemy's infantry by sending a Portuguese battalion against them; but these foreigners, old prisoners of war who had been enlisted in France rather unwillingly, did not face the fire with any energy, and we were still exposed. Perceiving that Oudinot was maintaining his position under the enemy's bullets bravely enough, but without giving any orders, I saw that if this state of things lasted a few minutes longer my regiment would be destroyed. So I ordered my chasseurs to open out and charge the Russian infantry in loose order, which had the advantage both of making them give way and of stopping the artillery fire, the gunners being afraid of hitting their own men. Under the sabres of my troopers the defenders of the camp fled in disorder towards the *tête de pont;* but the garrison entrusted with the defence of that work consisted of newly enlisted soldiers, who, fearing to see us enter with their comrades, closed the gates in a hurry, compelling the fugitives to make for the bridge of boats in order to reach the other bank and take shelter in the town. This bridge had no rail, the boats were unsteady, the river wide and deep, and on the other side I saw the garrison making ready to close the gates. To advance farther seemed to me madness, so, thinking that the regiment had done enough, I halted it. Just then the marshal came up, crying 'Brave 23rd! do as you did at Wilkomir: cross the bridge, force the gates, and capture the town.' In vain did General Laurencez try to make him see that the difficulty here was much greater, and that a cavalry regiment could not attack a fortress, however badly guarded, if to get there it had to cross a bad bridge of boats two abreast. The marshal was obstinate. He said they would profit by the enemy's disorder and fright, and ordered me afresh to march on the town.

I obeyed; but I had scarcely reached the first compartment of the bridge with my leading section, at the head of which I had felt bound in honour to place myself, when the garrison, having succeeded in closing the gate towards the river, appeared on the top of the ramparts and opened fire upon us. The narrow front which we presented offering but a small mark to unpractised soldiers, the fire caused us much less loss than I should have expected. But when the defenders of the *tête de pont* heard the fortress firing on us, they recovered from their scare and began themselves to take a hand in the game. Seeing the 23rd thus placed between two fires, and unable to advance beyond the near end of the shaky bridge, Marshal Oudinot sent me the order to retire. The wide spaces I had left between my sections allowed them to wheel round without too much disorder, yet two men and their horses fell into the river and were drowned. To regain the left bank we had to pass again under the ramparts of the *tête de pont*, and were again received with a rolling fire, which, very fortunately, proceeded from unskilful militiamen. If we had had to do with soldiers well accustomed to musketry practice the regiment must have been exterminated. As it was, this unlucky engagement, so imprudently brought about, cost us some thirty men killed and many wounded. One might at least have hoped that the marshal would rest content with this fruitless attempt, especially when, as I said before, he had no instructions from the Emperor to take Dünaborg; but when his infantry came up he ordered a fresh attack upon the *tête de pont*. The enemy had had time to strengthen the garrison of this, troops having hastened up from their cantonments at the sound of the cannon, and our men were repulsed with far heavier loss than the 23rd Chasseurs had suffered. Marshal Oudinot was blamed by the Emperor for this useless attempt.

My regiment was brigaded, as you know, with the 24th. General Castex had from the first day of the brigade's formation made an admirable arrangement of duty. Each of the two regiments, in turns of twenty-four hours, acted as advanced guard when we were going towards the enemy, and as rear-guard in retreating, supplied pickets, reconnoitring parties, and so forth; while the other, following easily, rested from the fatigues of the previous day and made ready for those of the morrow, being at the same time always ready to support its fellow if that had to do with a superior force. By this system the soldiers were never separated from their comrades and their own officers, nor mixed up with those of the other regiment. In the night one half of the brigade slept while the other mounted

guard. Of course everything has its inconveniences, and it might happen that one regiment should chance to be more often for duty on days when serious engagements took place, as was the case with the 23rd at Wilkomir and Dünaborg. Indeed, this was its luck throughcut most of the campaign; but it did not complain. It always came off with honour, and frequently was envied by the 24th, which got fewer opportunities of distinguishing itself.

Meanwhile Ney's corps, as well as Murat's immense cavalry reserve, were going up the left bank of the Dwina towards Polotsk, Wittgenstein's army taking the same direction by the right bank. Having thus the river between them and the enemy, our troopers kept a bad look-out, and, as the French habit is, bivouacked every night much too near the river bank. Wittgenstein, observing this, let Ney's infantry and most of Montbrun's cavalry pass on. Sebastiani's division brought up the rear of the column, its rear-guard being formed by the brigade under Saint-Geniès, formerly an officer in the Army of Egypt, a brave man but not very capable. Having reached a point opposite the little town of Druia, Saint-Geniès, by Sebastiani's orders, fixed his bivouac two hundred yards from the river, believing it impassable except by boat. But Wittgenstein knew of a practicable ford, and under cover of night passed a cavalry division across the stream. Falling on the French army, this carried off nearly the whole of Saint-Geniès' brigade, took the general prisoner, and forced Sebastiani to withdraw on Montbrun's corps promptly with the rest of his division. After this smart stroke Wittgenstein recalled his troops to the right bank and marched on up the Dwina. The affair did much discredit to Sebastiani, and brought him a reprimand from the Emperor.

Not long after this untoward event Oudinot received orders to go up the Dwina and rejoin Ney and Montbrun. His corps, taking the same route which the others had taken, came past the town of Druia. The marshal's plan was to encamp three leagues further on; but, fearing that the enemy might take advantage of the ford to attack his large baggage train, he decided that while he with the army moved on a regiment of Castex's brigade should pass the night, with orders to watch the ford, on the ground where Saint-Geniès had been surprised. My regiment was for duty that day, and the dangerous task of remaining opposite Druia alone fell to it. I knew that most of Wittgenstein's army had gone on up the river; but I could see that he had left near the ford two strong cavalry regiments —more than would be needed to beat me.

Even if I had wished to carry out literally the order to fix my bivouac on the same spot as Saint-Geniès had occupied two days before, it would have been impossible for me to do so, the ground being strewn with more than 200 decomposing bodies. But, in addition to this, I had another reason hardly less powerful. All my military experience had convinced me that the best means of defending a river against the attack of an enemy who does not wish to establish himself on your side of it is to keep the bulk of your force at some distance from the stream; first, in order to have timely warning of the enemy's passage; and secondly, because, his purpose being only to strike suddenly and then retire quickly, he will not dare to go far from the bank by which his retreat is secured. So I established my regiment half a league from the Dwina, in a field where the ground was slightly undulating. I had left only a few double vedettes on the river bank, for I am convinced that, when it is only a question of watching, two men see just as well as a strong picket. Several lines of horsemen were posted between the vedettes and our bivouac, serving like the threads of a spider's web to bring me rapid intelligence of whatever passed on the ground which I had to watch. Furthermore, I had forbidden all fire, even pipe-lights, and enjoined perfect silence. In Russia July nights are very short; however, this appeared to me very long, apprehensive as I was of being attacked in the darkness by a force stronger than my own. Half the men were in the saddle, the rest feeding their horses and ready to mount at the first signal. Everything appeared quiet on the opposite bank when Lorenz, my Polish servant, who spoke Russian perfectly, came and told me that he had heard an old Jewess in a neighbouring house say to another woman: 'The lantern is lighted on the tower of Morki: they are going to attack.' I sent for the women and questioned them through Lorenz, when they replied that, as they feared to see their hamlet become a battlefield, they had been alarmed at seeing the same light shining from the church of the village of Morki, on the opposite bank, which two nights before had been the signal for the Russian troops to cross the ford and charge upon the French camp. Although I was prepared for anything, this information was very useful to me. In an instant the regiment was mounted, swords were drawn, and the word was passed, in a low voice, for the vedettes on the river bank and the troopers who were posted across the plain to fall in. Two of the bravest non-commissioned officers, Prud'homme and Graft, went with Lieutenant Bertin to watch the movements of the enemy. In a few moments he came back,

announcing that a column of Russian cavalry was crossing the ford, that several squadrons were already on the bank, but that, surprised not to find our camp in the old place, they had halted, doubtless fearing to go too far from the ford. However, they had made up their minds, and were coming on at a walk, being by this time at no great distance from us. Instantly I ordered an immense hayrick and several barns to be set on fire; the flames lighted up the whole country, and I could plainly see the enemy's column, consisting of the Grodno Hussars. I had with me 1,000 brave troopers. With cries of 'Vive l'Empereur!' we galloped upon the Russians, who, surprised at so brisk and unexpected an attack, turned round and fled in disorder, sabred by the chasseurs, towards the ford over which they had come. There they found themselves face to face with a dragoon regiment, which, being brigaded with them, had followed them, and was only just coming out of the river. From the shock and confusion of the two regiments there resulted a fearful disorder, of which my men took advantage to kill a great number of the enemy and capture many horses. The Russians threw themselves in headlong tumult into the ford, and as, in order to escape the shots which my chasseurs were firing from the bank into the distracted crowd, they wanted all to cross at once, a good many were drowned. Our sudden attack in the plain had so astounded the enemy, who expected to catch us asleep, that not one stood on the defensive, but all fled without fighting; so that I had the pleasure of returning to my bivouac without having to lament the loss of one of my men. The dawning day lighted up our battlefield, where lay several hundred of the enemy, killed or wounded. I left them to the care of the inhabitants of the hamlet near which I had passed the night, and went on my way, rejoining Oudinot's corps that same evening. The marshal gave me a good reception, and complimented the regiment on its fine performance.

In three days the 2nd corps came opposite Polotsk. There we learnt that the Emperor had at last left Wilna after twenty days' stay, and was going towards Witebsk. On moving from Wilna the Emperor left the Duke of Bassano there in the capacity of governor of Lithuania, and General Hogendorf as military commander. Neither of these two officials was fitted to organise the communications of an army; for the Duke of Bassano, an old diplomat and careful secretary, knew nothing of administration; while Hogendorf, a Dutchman, who could hardly speak our language, and had no idea of our military customs and regulations, could not get on with the French who

passed through Wilna, or with the local nobility. Thus the wealth of Lithuania was of no assistance to our troops.

Polotsk, on the right bank of the Dwina, consists of wooden houses, and is commanded by a magnificent college, kept at that time by Jesuits, who were nearly all Frenchmen. It is surrounded with earthworks, and sustained a siege in the wars of Charles XII. The corps of Ney, Murat, and Montbrun, on their way from Drissa to Witebsk, had thrown a bridge of boats across the Dwina, opposite Polotsk, which they left for Oudinot's corps. Our destination was the St. Petersburg road, for at this point the 2nd corps took a direction different from that of the Grand Army; nor did we meet it again until the following winter at the passage of the Beresina.

It would take volumes to recount the manœuvres and combats of that part of the army which followed the Emperor to Moscow, so I shall confine myself to mentioning the most important events as I come to them. On July 25 there was an action near Ostrowno, very favourable to our infantry; but several cavalry regiments were brought into action by Murat too precipitately, among them the 16th Chasseurs. My brother, who was a major in that regiment, was captured and taken far beyond Moscow, to Sataroff, on the Volga, where he found Colonel Saint-Mars and Octave de Ségur. They helped each other mutually to support their wearisome captivity. My brother was already used to it, for he had passed several years in Spanish prisons and hulks. Our fortunes in war were very different; Adolphe, thrice taken prisoner, was never wounded; whereas I was wounded very often, but never captured.

While the Emperor, in possession of Wilna, was unsuccessfully manœuvring to force the Russian army to a decisive battle, Oudinot's corps, after crossing the Dwina at Polotsk, sat down before that town, having in front of it General Wittgenstein's troops, forming the enemy's right wing. Before recounting the incidents which took place on the banks of the Dwina I ought to say something of the composition of the 2nd corps. Marshal Oudinot had at first under his orders only 44,000 men, distributed among three infantry divisions, whose commanders were Generals Legrand, Verdier, and Merle, all three excellent officers, especially the first. Among the generals of brigade, Albert and Maison were conspicuous. The cavalry consisted of a superb division of cuirassiers and lancers, commanded by General Dumerc, a somewhat commonplace officer, having under him the brave Major-General Berckheim. There were also two brigades of light cavalry; the first, composed of the

23rd and 24th Chasseurs, was commanded by General Castex, an excellent soldier in all respects; the second, formed by the 7th and 20th Chasseurs and the 8th Polish Lancers, was under General Corbineau, a brave but indolent man. These two brigades were not formed into a division; the marshal attached them as they were wanted, now to the infantry divisions, now to the advanced or to the rear-guard—a system which had great advantages.

The 24th Chasseurs, with which my regiment was brigaded, was excellently constituted, and might have done great service if there had been a bond of sympathy between the soldiers and their commander. Unluckily, Colonel A—— was very harsh towards his subordinates, who, on their side, were not well disposed towards him. This state of things decided General Castex to march and camp with the 23rd, and to mess with me, although he had served in the 24th. Colonel A——, tall, active, always perfectly mounted, generally showed well in hand-to-hand combats, but was reputed to be less fond of musketry and artillery. With all his faults, the Emperor appreciated in him one quality, which he possessed in the highest degree: he was undoubtedly the best light cavalry officer in any European army. A finer tact or equal judgment in exploring a country with a glance was never seen. Before traversing a district he divined the obstacles which maps did not show, foresaw the points where streams, roads, or the smallest paths must come out, and could draw from the enemy's movements inferences which nearly always came true. Both in the details and in the general conception of war, he was a most remarkable officer. The Emperor, who in former campaigns had frequently employed him on reconnoissances, had brought him under the notice of Marshal Oudinot, by whom he was often called to counsel; the result of this being that many tasks and dangerous duties perforce fell to the share of my regiment.

CHAPTER LXV.

As soon as the corps which had preceded us to Polotsk had gone on to join the Emperor at Witebsk, Oudinot massed all his troops in one huge column on the St. Petersburg road, and on July 29 marched against Wittgenstein, whom he knew to be in position ten leagues from us between two towns named Sebesh and Nevel. That night we slept on the banks of the Drissa, an affluent of the Dwina. At Sivoshina, where the high road to St. Petersburg crosses it, it is no more than a large brook. There was no bridge; but the Russian Government had had the lofty banks sloped away on both sides, and the bottom of the stream paved to a width equal to the road. There was thus a practicable ford, but the bank was so steep on either hand that troops and wagons could not cross to right or left of it. This detail is necessary, because a few days later an active engagement took place there.

On the next day, my regiment being for duty, I took my place at the head of the advanced guard, and followed by the whole army corps, crossed the ford of the Drissa. The heat was most oppressive; in the dusty wheat on each side of the road could be seen two broad bands where the crushed and flattened straw, looking as if a roller had gone over it, marked the passage of large columns of infantry. Suddenly, close to the post-station of Kliastitsi, these tracks disappeared from the edge of the high road, and appeared again to the left on a broad cross-road ending at Jakobowo. It was evident that the enemy had at this point turned away from the direction of Sebesh to throw himself on our left flank. Matters seemed to me serious. I halted the troops and sent a message to my brigadier. But the marshal, who usually marched within sight of the advanced guard, noticing the halt, galloped up, and, in spite of all that Generals Castex and Laurencez could say, ordered me to keep on along the high road. I had hardly gone a league when I saw a kibitka, or Russian carriage, coming towards us, drawn by two post-horses. I stopped it, and found a Russian officer who had fallen asleep in the heat, and was lying at full length at the bottom of the carriage. He was a young man, son of the landowner to whom the station of Kliastitsi belonged, and aide-de-camp to General Wittgenstein, and was returning from St. Petersburg with an answer to despatches sent by his general

to the Government. His astonishment when he awoke with a start to find himself in the presence of our chasseurs with their forbidding countenances, and saw close by a French army, cannot be described. He could not understand how he had failed to meet the army of Wittgenstein, or at any rate some of his scouts, between Sebesh and the point where we were, which only confirmed General Castex and me in our belief that Wittgenstein had been setting a trap for Oudinot by quitting abruptly the road to St. Petersburg in order to throw himself on the rear and left flank of our army, and in fact we soon heard the sound of cannon, and shortly after that of musketry. Marshal Oudinot, although surprised at so unforeseen an attack, got out of the fix pretty well. Ordering the various portions of his columns to left-face, he got them into line, and so vigorously repulsed Wittgenstein's first attack, that the Russian thought it best not to try again that day, and retired behind Jakobowo. His cavalry, however, had a fair measure of success, for it captured in our rear a thousand men and part of the baggage, including our field forges. This was a serious loss, of which the cavalry of the 2nd corps was painfully conscious throughout the campaign. After this engagement Oudinot's troops took up their position, while Castex's brigade was ordered to march back as far as Kliastitsi and guard the point where the roads divided, General Maison's infantry presently joining us. The Russian officer, a prisoner in his own father's house, did the honours of it very gracefully.

Meanwhile, preparations were being made by the commanders on both sides for a serious engagement on the morrow, and at daybreak the Russians marched on the post-house of Kliastitsi, on which the French right rested. Although in such circumstances the whole brigade was employed, the regiment for duty formed the first line, and to-day it was the turn of the 24th. To avoid all delay, General Castex put himself at the head of the regiment, and led them at the Russian battalions, breaking them and taking 400 prisoners with very small loss. He was the first to enter the enemy's ranks. His horse was killed by a bayonet, and the general in his fall sprained his foot. It was several days before he could lead the brigade again, and Colonel A—— took the command. The Russian battalions which the 24th had cut up were at once replaced by others which debouched from Jakobowo, and advanced rapidly upon us. The marshal sent orders to M. A—— to attack them, and he gave the word for the second line to pass to the front, which I duly executed. As soon as the 23rd were re-formed in

line we marched upon the Russian infantry, which halted and steadily awaited us ; it was the Tamboff regiment. When we were within striking distance I gave the word to charge. This was carried out all the more efficiently for the stimulus which the fact that their comrades of the 24th were watching them gave to my troopers. The enemy committed the serious blunder, as I think it, of spending all his fire at once, by giving us a volley, which, badly aimed as it was, emptied but few saddles. A file fire would have been far more destructive. Before the Russians could reload we were upon them at the full speed of our excellent horses, and the shock was so violent that they were overthrown in heaps. Many rose again and tried to defend themselves with the bayonet against the troopers' points ; but after losing heavily they fell back, and at last broke, many being killed or captured as they fled towards a cavalry regiment which was coming up to their aid. It was the Grodno Hussars. Now I have observed that when one regiment has beaten another it always retains the superiority, and here I had a fresh proof of it, for the 23rd dashed at the Grodno Hussars, whom they had beaten so soundly in the night engagement at Druia, as at an easy prey ; while the hussars, recognising their conquerors, fled in all haste. Throughout the rest of the campaign this regiment was always meeting the 23rd, which steadily preserved the upper hand.

While these events were taking place on our right, the infantry of the centre and left had attacked the Russians, who, beaten all along the line, left the field of battle, and took up their position at nightfall a league away. Our army retained its ground between Jakobowo and the division of the roads at Kliastitsi. Great was the joy at our victory in the bivouacs of the brigade that evening.

My regiment had taken the colour of the Tamboff regiment, and the 24th that of the Russian regiment which it had broken ; but its satisfaction was dashed by the fact that both its majors were wounded. The senior, M. Monginot, was in all respects an officer of the highest merit; the other was the colonel's brother, and, though he had not his abilities, was a most valiant officer. They both soon got well, and served throughout the campaign.

When a force tries to turn its enemy's flank it is liable itself to be turned. That was what happened to Wittgenstein, for, having, on the 29th, left the St. Petersburg road to fling himself on the left and rear of the French army, he had endangered his own line of communications ; and if Oudinot had followed up

his victory of the 30th with vigour, it might have been completely cut. The Russian general's position seemed still more hazardous when he learnt that Marshal Macdonald, having crossed the Dwina and taken Dünaborg, was advancing on his rear. To get out of this fix, Wittgenstein had cleverly employed the whole night after the battle in making a detour across-country, bringing his army by Jakobowo back to the St. Petersburg road, beyond the post-station of Kliastitsi. Fearing, however, lest the French right, near which he must pass, should charge his troops during their flank march, he resolved to stop it by himself attacking our right wing with a superior force, while the rest of his army was executing the movement which was to reopen his communications with Sebesh. Next morning, as my regiment was going on duty at daybreak, a portion of the enemy's army, which we had beaten on the previous day, was seen to have turned our extreme right, in full retreat to Sebesh, while the remainder was coming to attack us at Kliastitsi. In an instant all Marshal Oudinot's troops stood to their arms; but while the generals were making their arrangements a column of Russian grenadiers attacked and routed the Portuguese legion, and was marching on the large and solid post-house. It was on the point of capturing this important position, when the marshal, always foremost under fire, hurried up to my regiment, which by this time was at the outposts, and ordered me to try to stop the enemy, or at least delay him till our infantry could come up. I took my regiment along at a gallop and ordered them to charge, taking the enemy's line obliquely from its right, which always hampers infantry fire considerably. That of the grenadiers was, therefore, ineffective, and they would soon have felt our sabres. They were wavering already, when, whether instinctively or by order from their commander, they faced about and ran for a deep ditch which lay behind them, jumping into it, and, covered up to the chin, they opened a well-sustained file fire. In a moment I had six or seven men killed and a score wounded, and received myself a bullet in the left shoulder. My troopers were wild; but our rage was powerless against men whom we were physically unable to reach. At this critical moment General Maison came up with his brigade of infantry, and ordered me to retire behind his battalions; then he attacked the ditch from both flanks, killing or capturing all its defenders. As for me, I was taken severely wounded to the post-house, and helped to dismount with difficulty. Dr. Parot, our regimental surgeon-major, came to dress me; but the operation had hardly begun when it

had to be interrupted. The Russian infantry was renewing its attack, and bullets were dropping like hail about us; so that we had to move out of range. The doctor found my wound serious: it would have been mortal had not the thick twisted fringe of my epaulette turned the bullet and greatly deadened the force of the blow. This, however, was hard enough to throw me violently back till my body touched the croup of my horse; the officers and men who were behind me thought I was killed, and I should have fallen if my orderlies had not held me up. The dressing was very painful, as the bullet had stuck in the bones just where the humerus is joined to the clavicle. To extract it the wound had to be enlarged, and the great scar is still to be seen. I confess that if I had been colonel I should have accompanied the troops of wounded who were being sent to Polotsk, crossed the Dwina, and gone to some town in Lithuania where I could get attended to. But I was only major; the Emperor might come posting in a day from Witebsk to review the regiments, and he never did anything except for soldiers present under arms. This rule, which at first sight seems cruel, was really in the interest of the service. It kept up the zeal of those who had been wounded, and made them eager to rejoin their regiments as soon as they could, instead of dawdling in hospital, and the army gained much in efficient strength. Besides, I had every inducement to stay: success against the enemy, attachment to the regiment, the fact that I had been wounded when fighting with it. So I stayed, though suffering intolerable pain, and, putting my arm as well as I could into a sling, and getting hoisted on to my horse, went back to the regiment.

Since I had received my wound the aspect of affairs was much changed; our men had beaten Wittgenstein and taken many prisoners. However, the Russians had succeeded in reaching the St. Petersburg road and effecting their retreat towards Sebesh. In order to reach this town from Kliastitsi it is necessary to cross the vast swamp of Khodanui through which the great road is carried on an embankment formed of huge fir-stems laid side by side. A ditch, or rather a broad and deep canal, runs along each side of the embankment, and there is no other means of passing without going a long way in the direction of Sebesh. This passage is more than a league in length, but the wooden road is of considerable width. As, therefore, it was impossible to place skirmishers in the marsh, the Russians retired in dense columns along this artificial road, beyond which our maps marked a plain. Marshal Oudinot,

wishing to complete his victory, decided to pursue them, and to this end he had already sent Verdier's infantry division by the road through the marsh, to be followed first by Castex's cavalry brigade and then by the whole army corps. My regiment had not yet taken its place in the column when I rejoined it. On seeing me resume my place at their head in spite of my wound, officers and men received me with a general cheer, which, as showing the esteem and regard which the good fellows had conceived for me, touched me deeply. I felt especially grateful for the satisfaction which my colleague Major Fontaine expressed on seeing me again. This officer, though a brave and highly capable man, had so little ambition that he remained captain for eighteen years, thrice declined a majority and only accepted it at the Emperor's express order.

I resumed then the command of the 23rd, and we made our way through the marsh after Verdier's division; the near sections of the enemy's column contenting themselves with firing a few long shots while we were on the causeway. As soon, however, as our infantry debouched into the plain they saw the Russian army deployed, and were received by a heavy fire of artillery. In spite of their losses the French battalions marched forward, and soon were all in the open ground. Then it was the turn of my regiment to show itself on the plain at the head of the brigade. Colonel A——, who was provisionally in command, not being there to give us orders, I thought to get my regiment as soon as possible away from the dangerous place, and gave the word to gallop as soon as the infantry made room for me. Even so I had seven or eight men killed and many more wounded, while the 24th also suffered heavily. It was the same with General Legrand's infantry division; but as soon as this had formed in the plain Marshal Oudinot attacked the enemy, and their artillery had to distribute its fire upon several points, so that the issue from the causeway would have become less dangerous for the other troops, had not Wittgenstein at that moment attacked the troops which we had in the open ground with his entire force. Being outnumbered, we had to give way till the rest of our army came up, and were compelled to retreat towards the causeway. Fortunately the way was very broad, which made it easy for us to march in sections. Directly we left the plain the cavalry became more a hindrance than a help, so the marshal withdrew that first. It was followed by Verdier's infantry division, the general himself having been very severely wounded. Legrand's division formed the rear-guard, and his rear brigade, under General Albert, had to

maintain a brisk fight just as its last battalions were on the point of entering the marsh. Once they were in column, however, General Albert placed eight guns to bring up the rear, and these as they retired fired upon the enemy's advanced guard, causing it considerable loss. His own guns, indeed, were only able to fire at rare intervals, because after every round they had to face about once to continue the pursuit, and once again to fire, and these movements take time and cause a good deal of trouble in a narrow space. Thus the Russian artillery did us very little damage in passing the marsh. Night was drawing on when the French troops issued from the causeway, passed Kliastitsi, and found themselves on the banks of the Drissa, at the ford of Sivoshina, which they had crossed in the morning in pursuit of the Russians, after beating them at Kliastitsi.[1] They had now taken their revenge, for, after having killed and wounded 700 or 800 of our men on the other side of the marsh, they were in their turn driving us at the sword's point. In order to put an end to the fighting and give our army a little repose, Marshal Oudinot made it cross the ford and encamp at Bieloe.

It was early in the night when our outposts on the Drissa sent word that the enemy was crossing the stream. Marshal Oudinot betook himself promptly to the spot, and observed that eight Russian battalions, with fourteen guns on their front, had just taken up their quarters on the left bank. The bulk of their army was on the other side, no doubt making ready to cross and attack us on the next day. The advanced guard was commanded by General Kulnieff, a man of much enterprise, but having, like most of the Russian officers of that time, the bad habit of drinking too much brandy. He must have taken an extra quantity that evening, for otherwise it would be impossible to explain the huge blunder which he made in coming, with only eight battalions, to encamp close to an army of 40,000 men, and that under conditions most unfavourable to himself. He had, in fact, 200 paces in rear of his line the Drissa, which except at the ford could not be forced—not, indeed, on account of its depth, but because its vertical banks were fifteen to twenty feet high. Kulnieff therefore had no way of retreat but by the ford; and could he expect in case he were defeated that his eight battalions and fourteen guns could get away with sufficient rapidity by this one passage in face of the whole French army, which at any moment could come down upon them from its

[1] [The topography here seems somewhat confused. Sivoshina is some miles to the south of Kliastitsi, and, as will be seen by reference to p. 514, the French had crossed the ford before the action at the latter place.]

position close by? But General Kulnieff must have been in no condition to make these reflections when he fixed his camp on the left bank of the stream. It was certainly surprising that Wittgenstein should have relied on Kulnieff, whose intemperate habits he must have known, to settle the position of his advanced guard.

While the head of the Russian column was being arrogantly brought to so short a distance from us, great confusion prevailed, not among the French troops but among their leaders. Marshal Oudinot, one of the bravest of men, was wanting in decision, and passed in a moment from planning an attack to making arrangements for retreat. The loss which he had suffered on the further side of the great marsh had thrown him into much perplexity, and he did not know how he was to carry out the Emperor's orders, according to which he was to drive Wittgenstein back on the St. Petersburg road at least as far as Sebesh and Nevel. It was therefore with much joy that he received during the night a despatch announcing the immediate arrival of a Bavarian corps commanded by General Saint-Cyr, whom the Emperor placed under his orders. But instead of awaiting this reinforcement in a good position, Oudinot wanted, following the advice of General Dulauloy of the artillery, to go and meet the Bavarians by withdrawing his whole army as far as Polotsk. This extraordinary idea met with a lively opposition from the council of generals whom the marshal had called together. General Legrand explained that though our success of the morning had been counterbalanced by the losses of the evening the army was perfectly well disposed to march against the enemy; that to make it beat a retreat on Polotsk would have the effect of lowering its tone and displaying it to the Bavarians as a vanquished force coming to seek shelter with them; in short, that the mere idea would be degrading to every French heart. Legrand's warm address carried the votes of all the generals, and the marshal declared that he renounced his plan of retreat. One important question remained to be settled: what should be done when daylight appeared? General Legrand, with the authority of long and distinguished service and great experience in war, proposed that we should take advantage of Kulnieff's mistake, attack the Russian advance-guard which had been placed so imprudently without support on our bank, and drive it into the Drissa. The marshal and all the council accepted this plan, and its execution was entrusted to General Legrand.

Oudinot's army was encamped in a forest of large fir-trees standing well apart. Beyond it was a large clearing. The

edge of the wood formed an arc, of which the river was the chord. The Russian battalions were bivouacking very close to the river opposite to the ford, with fourteen guns in battery along its front. Wishing to surprise the enemy, General Legrand ordered General Albert to place a regiment of infantry in the wood at each extremity of the arc, and as soon as he heard the sound of cavalry in march, to advance upon both flanks of the enemy's camp, while the cavalry issuing from the wood at the middle of the arc was to charge at full speed upon the Russian battalions and drive them into the ravine. The duty assigned to the cavalry was clearly one of great peril; for not only had it to deliver a front attack upon the enemy's line, but before reaching it to receive the fire of fourteen guns. It is true that by surprising the Russians we had a good hope of catching them asleep, and meeting with little resistance.

My regiment, having, as you have seen, been on duty the whole of July 31, was as usual to be relieved by the 24th at 1 A.M. on August 1. That regiment was therefore ordered to attack, and mine to act in reserve, for the vacant space between the wood and the stream would only hold one regiment of cavalry. Colonel A—— went to Oudinot and remarked that there was reason to fear that while we were making ready to fight the troops in front of us Wittgenstein would have sent a small column off to our right to cross the Drissa at a ford which probably existed three leagues higher than the point where we were, work round to our rear, and carry off our wounded and our baggage, and that it would therefore be as well to send a cavalry regiment to watch the ford in question. The marshal fell in with this idea, and Colonel A——, whose regiment had just gone on duty, ordered it to mount at once, and, taking it off on the proposed expedition, left the risk of the anticipated combat to the 23rd. My brave regiment, however, received the announcement of the dangerous task which it had to perform very calmly, and was delighted to see the marshal and General Legrand pass along the front of the line to superintend our preparations for the attack.

At that period all the French regiments except the cuirassiers had a picked or grenadier company or troop, which was always placed on the right of the line. That of the 23rd was in its place accordingly, when General Legrand remarked to the marshal that as the enemy's artillery was in front of his centre, and this would consequently be the point of greatest danger, it would be best, in order to avoid all possible hesitation, that the attack at that point should be made by the picked

troop, consisting of the most seasoned men and the best horses. It was of no use to assure the marshal that the regiment, being almost entirely composed of veteran soldiers, was in all respects, moral and physical, just as strong in one part as another; he ordered me to place the picked troop in the centre. I obeyed, and, calling together my officers, I explained to them in a low voice what we had to do, and gave them notice that, in order to surprise the enemy better, I should confine myself to giving the word 'Charge,' without any preliminary command, as soon as our line was in short striking distance of the enemy's guns. Everything being settled, the regiment came out of its bivouac in dead silence with the first streak of dawn, and passed through the wood easily enough. Then we entered the level clearing, at the further end of which was the Russian encampment. Alone of the whole regiment, I had no sword in my hand, for my right, the only one which I could use, was occupied in holding the reins—a painful position, as you can understand, for a cavalry officer who was just about to lead a charge. But I was determined to march with my regiment, and so took my place in front of the picked troop, having close to me its brave captain, M. Courteau, one of the best officers in the regiment, and the one to whom I was most attached.

All was perfectly quiet in the Russian camp as we advanced noiselessly at a walk, and my hope of surprising it rose when I saw that General Kulnieff had brought no cavalry across the ford, and we could distinguish by the faint light of the fires only a few infantry sentries, and those so near the camp that between the time they gave notice and our sudden appearance it was probable that the Russians would not be able to prepare for the defence. But suddenly, two ugly Cossacks, prowling and suspicious beings, appeared on horseback thirty paces from my line, looked at it for a moment, and sped away towards the camp, where, it was clear, they would announce our coming. This was a most disagreeable mishap, since but for it we should certainly have fallen upon the Russians without losing a single man. However, as we were discovered, and were, besides, approaching the point at which I had settled to quicken the pace, I put my horse into a gallop. The whole regiment did the same, and very soon I let them have the word to charge. Thereupon all my valiant troops dashed with me towards the camp, and we fell upon it like a thunderbolt. But the Cossacks had given the alarm; the gunners, who were lying close to their pieces, snatched up their linstocks, and the guns at once belched grape at my regiment. Thirty-seven men, of whom

nineteen belonged to the picked troop, fell dead on the spot, including Captain Courteau and Lieutenant Lallouette. Before the Russian gunners could reload they were cut down by our men. We had few wounded, nearly every hit having been mortal; some forty of our horses had been killed; mine was lamed by a grape-shot, but was able to carry me into the camp, where the Russian infantry, suddenly aroused, were already hurrying to their arms. The chasseurs by my orders had placed themselves between them and the piled arms, so that very few were able to get at their muskets and open fire on us. At the sound of the cannon General Albert's two regiments of infantry had issued from the wood and hastened at the double to the two ends of the camp, where they were bayoneting all who tried to defend themselves. The Russians, in their confusion, could not resist this triple attack, and great part of them, who, having come across at night, had not been able to see the height of the banks, tried to escape in that direction, and fell fifteen or twenty feet on to the rocks. In this way many perished.

General Kulnieff, scarcely awake, made his way towards a group of 2,000 men, of whom a third at most had muskets, and, following mechanically this disordered crowd, appeared at the ford. But on entering the camp I had caused this important point to be held by 500 or 600 cavalry, including the picked troop. These men, enraged at the loss of their captain, dashed furiously at the Russians, and a great slaughter ensued. General Kulnieff, already swaying on his horse with intoxication, attacked Sergeant Legendre, who ran him through the throat, stretching him dead at his feet. In his account of the campaign of 1812, M. de Ségur makes Kulnieff, when dying, deliver an oration, like a hero in Homer. I was a few paces from Sergeant Legendre when he plunged his sabre into Kulnieff's throat, and I can certify that the Russian general fell dead without uttering a word.[1] The victory of General Albert's infantry and the 23rd was complete. The enemy lost at least 2,000 killed and wounded, and we took nearly 4,000 prisoners; the rest perished in the fall on to the sharp rocks. A few of the more nimble succeeded in rejoining Wittgenstein, who, on learning the sanguinary defeat of his advanced guard, retreated on Sebesh.

[1] [We read in M. de Ségur's book: 'The death of Kulnieff was, it is said, heroic. A cannon-ball broke both his legs and threw him down on one of his own guns. Then, seeing the French approaching, he tore off his decorations, and, in wrath with himself for his rashness, condemned himself to die on the scene of his blunder, ordering his men to leave him to his fate.']

Emboldened by this brilliant success, Marshal Oudinot resolved to pursue the Russians, and again passed the army to the right bank of the Drissa; but in order to allow Albert's brigade and the 23rd time to recover from the fatigues of the action, he left them posted in observation on the field of battle. I took advantage of this rest to perform a ceremony seldom enough attended to in time of war, namely, to pay the last duties to those of our brave comrades who had fallen. A good-sized trench received them all, laid according to their ranks, with Captain Courteau and his lieutenant at the head of the line. Then the fourteen Russian guns, which the 23rd had so valiantly captured, were placed in front of the soldiers' grave.

This pious duty completed, I thought I would have my wound dressed, as it was causing me intense pain, and sat down for that purpose a little way off, under a huge pine. There I saw a young major, who, with his back against the trunk of the tree, and supported by two grenadiers, was painfully fastening a small packet the address of which was traced with blood; the blood was his own. He belonged to Albert's brigade, and had received in the attack on the Russian camp a fearful bayonet wound which had laid his body open. The wound had been dressed, but the blood continued to flow, and the stroke had been a deadly one. The poor man, who was aware of this, had wished before he succumbed to send his adieux to a lady to whom he was attached, but after he had written it he did not know to whom to entrust the precious missive. Just then chance brought me in his way. We knew each other only by sight; still, feeling that death was close at hand, he begged me in a scarcely audible voice to do him two services, and after having sent the grenadiers a little way off, he gave me the packet, saying, with tears in his eyes, 'There is a portrait in it.' He made me promise to place it with secrecy in the proper hands if I was ever fortunate enough to return to Paris; 'besides,' he added, 'there is no hurry, for it will be better that it should not be received till long after I am no more.' I promised to discharge this sad commission, but it was two years before I was able to do so. As for the second entreaty that the young major addressed to me, it was complied with two hours afterwards. It was painful to him to think of his body being torn to pieces by the wolves, with which the country swarms, and he begged that I would place him beside the captain and troopers of the 23rd, whose burial he had seen. I undertook to do so, and the poor officer having died soon after our interview, I carried out his last wishes.

CHAPTER LXVI.

PROFOUNDLY touched by this melancholy episode, I was plunged in sad reflections, when I was roused from my reverie by the distant sound of a lively cannonade. The two armies were again engaged. It turned out that Marshal Oudinot, having passed the station of Kliastitsi, had come up with the Russian rear-guard at the entry of the marsh, the issue from which had been so deadly to us twenty-four hours before, and had set himself to drive the enemy back into it. But the enemy, not being disposed to pass this dangerous strait, had made a counter-attack in force upon the French troops, who after considerable loss were retreating, pursued by the Russians. One would have said that Oudinot and Wittgenstein were playing prisoners' base: when one advanced the other retired, to pursue in his turn as soon as the adversary had beat a retreat. This new recoil on Oudinot's part was announced to us on the battlefield of Sivoshina by an aide-de-camp, who at the same time brought an order to General Albert to take his brigade and the 23rd Chasseurs two leagues to the rear in the direction of Polotsk. At the moment of starting, as I did not wish to abandon the fourteen guns which my regiment had captured in the morning, the horses which had drawn them from the enemy having also fallen into our hands, we harnessed them and drove them to our next bivouac, whence this glorious trophy of the courage of the 23rd was forwarded the next night to Polotsk, and our fourteen guns very shortly rendered efficacious help in the defence of that town. Oudinot's army retreated that day as far as the ford of Sivoshina, while Wittgenstein, rendered more cautious by the disaster which his advance-guard had incurred at the same spot that morning, did not dare to venture any detached corps on the bank occupied by our troops, and, with the Drissa between them, both armies took up their positions for the night. But on August 2, Oudinot having brought his troops near Polotsk, both sides were in such need of rest that hostilities ceased for some days. The good General Castex rejoined us, and also the 24th, who were by no means grateful to their colonel for having carried them off just when it was their turn to attack the Russian camp, while on their way up the Drissa they had neither seen a single enemy nor found the supposed ford.

After a few days' rest Wittgenstein took part of his troops lower down the Dwina, where Macdonald was threatening his

right. Marshal Oudinot having followed the Russian army in that direction, they faced round towards us, and for eight or ten days there were continual marches and counter-marches, and many small engagements, of which it would be too long and too troublesome to give particulars, seeing that all this led to no other result than a useless slaughter of men, and a proof that the commanders of the two armies were lacking in decision. The most serious of the combats which were fought during this short period took place on August 13, near the splendid convent of Valensoui, on the banks of the Svolna. This little stream, the banks of which are very muddy, lay between the French and the Russians, and it was evident that whichever of the two generals tried to force a passage over such unfavourable ground would incur a sanguinary repulse. Accordingly, neither Wittgenstein nor Oudinot had any plan of crossing the Svolna at this point; but, instead of going elsewhere to look for a battle-field on which they might try conclusions, both took up their position on the stream, as though in mutual defiance. Very soon a brisk cannonade was set up between the two banks; utterly useless, because on neither side could the troops reach their adversary; so that this deplorable fighting could not be of the least advantage to anybody. Wittgenstein, however, to spare his soldiers, had merely posted a few battalions of infantry among the willows and reeds on the river's edge, keeping his other troops out of range of the French guns, whose well-sustained fire only reached a few of his skirmishers. Oudinot, however, insisted, in spite of the prudent remarks of several generals, on bringing his first line near the river, and thus incurred losses which he could and should have avoided. The Russian artillery is far from being as good as ours, but on campaign it employs pieces called *unicorns*, the range of which was longer than that of any French guns of that period, and it was these that did the greatest execution among our troops.

Marshal Oudinot, persuaded that the enemy was going to cross the stream, not only kept a division of infantry near enough to repulse them, but also made General Castex's cavalry support it; a superfluous precaution, since the crossing of even a small river requires more time than the defenders need to come up to meet the attack. In spite of this, my regiment and the 24th were exposed for twenty-four hours to the Russian cannon-balls, which killed and maimed a good many of our men.

While this action was going on, the aide-de-camp whom Oudinot had sent to the Emperor at Witebsk with the report of the fighting at Kliastitsi and Sivoshina returned. Napoleon

lavishly rewarded the 2nd corps, both with promotions and with decorations, to show that he did not hold the troops responsible for the ill-success of our operations. Four Crosses of the Legion of Honour were awarded to each cavalry regiment; but with regard to the 23rd Chasseurs Berthier added that, in order to express his satisfaction at the admirable conduct of the regiment in the various engagements, the Emperor sent it, over and above the four rewards given to the other regiments, fourteen decorations, one for each gun captured by it from Kulnieff's advanced guard. I had therefore eighteen crosses to distribute to my brave regiment. The aide-de-camp had not brought the patents, but the chief of the staff supplemented his message by asking the commanders of regiments to indicate the soldiers who should receive them, and send him the list. I assembled all the captains, and, guiding myself by their advice, I drew up my list and went to present it to Marshal Oudinot, begging him to let me announce it on the spot to the regiment. 'What? here among the cannon-balls?' 'Yes, marshal, among the cannon-balls; it would be more chivalrous.'

General Laurencez, who, as senior staff officer, had drawn up the report of the various actions, and warmly eulogised the 23rd Chasseurs, being of my opinion, the marshal acceded to my request. The decorations would not come till later, but I sent for a piece of ribbon which I happened to have in my baggage, and, cutting it into eighteen pieces, I made known to the regiment the rewards which had been granted them by the Emperor. Then, calling the recipients out of the ranks in their turn, I gave each a bit of the red ribbon, which then was so coveted, and so honourably borne, and of which the distinction has been since so sadly lowered by the way in which it has been lavished—I may say prostituted. This distribution in presence of the enemy, under fire, produced an immense effect on the regiment, and their enthusiasm rose to the highest point when I called old Sergeant Prud'homme, justly reputed the bravest and the most modest soldier in the whole regiment. Calm as ever, this hero, famous in many brilliant actions, came up with a shy demeanour and received the ribbon amid the hearty cheers of all the squadrons. It was a real triumph for him. I shall never forget this touching scene, which, as I have said, took place under the guns of the enemy. But no happiness is complete. Two men whom I had got on my list as most nearly rivalling Prud'homme in desert had just been cruelly wounded: Sergeant Legendre, the slayer of General Kulnieff, had had an arm carried away, and Corporal Griffon a leg smashed. They

were undergoing amputation when I proceeded to the ambulance to give them their decorations. At the sight of the ribbon of the Legion of Honour they seemed to forget their pain, and broke forth into the liveliest joy. Legendre, however, did not survive his wound long, but Griffon got well and was sent back to France; some years afterwards I came across him again at the Invalides.

The 24th Chasseurs, which only got four decorations, while the 23rd got eighteen, admitted that it was fair, but none the less displayed its regret at having lost the honour of capturing the fourteen Russian guns, even at the cost of incurring the losses which we had undergone. 'We are soldiers,' they said, 'and we must take our luck as it comes.' But they were very sore with their colonel for what they called superseding them. What an army was that of which the soldiers claimed as a privilege to march against the enemy!

You are doubtless asking what I got for myself in this distribution of rewards. Nothing whatever; because the Emperor, before deciding to withdraw the command of the regiment from Colonel de la Nougarède by promoting him, wished to be sure that his health would allow him to serve as general, or head of a legion of gendarmerie. Marshal Oudinot was therefore directed to have him examined by a medical board. Their opinion was that he would never be able to ride again, and the marshal accordingly gave him leave to return to France, where he was put in command of a second-class fortress. Before leaving Polotsk, whither he had been compelled by infirmity to retire, the poor colonel wrote me a very touching letter in which he took leave of the 23rd; and although he had never led the regiment into action, which attaches troops more than anything to their commander, he was nevertheless regretted, as he well deserved. The regiment being thus left without a colonel, the marshal expected to receive notice of my promotion to that rank, and I frankly admit that I also quite hoped for it; but the Emperor having left Witebsk to march on Smolensk, departmental business slackened under the stress of business caused by military operations. It was still three months before I got my step.

But let us return to the banks of the Svolna. The French retired hurriedly, leaving a portion of their wounded in the convent of Valensoui. Among those whom we succeeded in removing was Colonel Casabianca, of the 11th Light Infantry, who had been my comrade in the days when we were both serving as aides-de-camp to Masséna. He was an officer of the highest merit, and promotion had come to him very quickly; but he

was struck in the head when visiting the skirmishers of his regiment on the banks of the Svolna, and his career was cut short. He was dying when I saw him on a stretcher carried by the pioneers. He knew me, and, pressing my hand, said how sorry he was to see our corps led in such poor style. That very evening the unfortunate colonel breathed his last. His dying words were only too well-founded; for our chief seemed to act with neither method nor plan. After a success he would pursue Wittgenstein without heeding any obstacle, and spoke of nothing but driving him to St. Petersburg. But at the least check he would quickly retreat, and see an enemy everywhere. It was under this latter impression that he brought his troops back under the walls of Polotsk, much annoyed as they were at being thus made to retreat before the Russians, whom they had beaten in almost every encounter.

On August 15, the Emperor's *fête* day, the 2nd army corps arrived, in very low spirits, at Polotsk, where we found the 6th corps, formed by two fine Bavarian divisions, under General Wrede, and commanded in chief by a French general, Gouiron Saint-Cyr. The Emperor had sent this reinforcement of 8,000 to 10,000 men to Marshal Oudinot, who would have received it with more satisfaction if he had not dreaded the influence of its leader. Saint-Cyr was, indeed, one of the most able soldiers in Europe; a contemporary and rival of Moreau, Hoche, Kleber, and Desaix, he had commanded successfully a wing of the Army of the Rhine at a time when Oudinot was colonel, or at most major-general. I never knew anyone handle troops in battle better than Saint-Cyr. He was a son of a small landowner at Toul, and had studied for a civil engineer; but, disliking this profession, he became an actor in Paris, and it was he who created the famous part of Robert, the brigand chief, at the *Théâtre de la Cité*. The revolution of 1789 found him in this position; he entered a volunteer battalion, showed talent and much courage, and very quickly rose to the rank of lieutenant-general, and distinguished himself by many successes. He was of tall stature, but looked more like a professor than a soldier, which may perhaps be ascribed to the habit which, like the other generals of the Army of the Rhine, he had acquired of wearing neither uniform nor epaulettes, but a plain blue overcoat. It was impossible to find a calmer man; the greatest danger, disappointments, successes, defeats, were alike unable to move him. In presence of every sort of contingency he was like ice. It may be easily understood of what advantage such a character, backed by a taste for study and meditation, was to

a general officer. But Saint-Cyr had serious faults as well: he was jealous of his colleagues, and was often seen to keep his troops inactive when other divisions were being shattered close to him. Then he would advance, and, profiting by the enemy's weariness, would beat them, seeming thus to have the sole credit of the victory. Further, if he was among the commanders who were best able to handle their troops on the field, he was undoubtedly the one who took least thought for their welfare. He never inquired if his soldiers had food, clothing, or boots, or if their arms were in good condition. He never held a review, never visited the hospitals, did not even ask if there were any. His view was that the colonels ought to see to all that. In a word, he expected that his regiments should be brought into the field all ready to fight, without troubling himself about the means to keep them in good condition. This method of procedure had done Saint-Cyr much harm, and wherever he had served, his troops, while doing justice to his military talents, had disliked him. His colleagues all dreaded having to act with him, and the different successive Governments of France had only employed him from necessity. It was the same with the Emperor; and such was his antipathy for Saint-Cyr that he did not include him in his first creation of marshals, although he had a better record and much greater talent than the majority of those to whom Napoleon gave the baton. Such was the man who had just been placed under Oudinot's command, much to his regret, for he knew that he would be put in the shade by Saint-Cyr's superior ability.

On August 16, the day on which my eldest son Alfred[1] was born, the Russian army, more than 60,000 strong, attacked Oudinot, who, with Saint-Cyr's Bavarians, had 52,000 men at his disposal. In an ordinary war an engagement in which 112,000 men took part would have been called a battle, and its decision would have had important results; but in 1812, amid belligerent forces amounting to 600,000 or 700,000 men, the meeting of 100,000 only reckoned as a combat. At any rate this is the name given to the affair between Oudinot and the Russians under the walls of Polotsk. This town, which stands on the left bank of the Dwina, is surrounded with ancient earthworks. Before the principal front of the place, the fields, in which vegetables are grown, are cut up by an infinite number of little water-courses; obstacles which, though not exactly impassable for guns and cavalry, hamper their march a good

[1] [Baron Alfred de Marbot was *Maître des Requêtes* to the Council of State. He died 1865.]

deal. These market-gardens extended to some half a league before the town ; but to their left, along the bank of the Dwina, is a vast stretch of meadow, level as a carpet. That was the side by which the Russian general should have attacked Polotsk. He would thus have become master of the single weak bridge of boats affording us our only communication with the left bank, whence we drew our supplies of ammunition and provisions. But Wittgenstein preferred to take the bull by the horns, and directed his main body towards the gardens, hoping to be able from thence to carry the place by escalade ; the ramparts being, in fact, nothing but slopes easy to ascend, though commanding a distant view. The attack was smartly delivered ; but our infantry defended the gardens bravely, while from the top of the ramparts our artillery, including the fourteen guns captured at Sivoshina, did terrible execution in the enemy's ranks. The Russians retired in disorder to re-form in the plain ; and Oudinot, instead of maintaining his good position, pursued them, and was in his turn repulsed. Thus a great part of the day passed ; the Russians returning incessantly to the attack and the French always driving them back beyond the gardens. While the slaughter thus swayed to and fro Saint-Cyr followed Oudinot in silence ; and whenever his opinion was asked he merely bowed and said : 'My lord marshal !' as though he would say : 'As they have made you a marshal, you must know more about the matter than a mere general like me ; get out of it as best you can.'

Meanwhile Wittgenstein was losing enormously ; and, despairing of success by continuing to attack on the side of the gardens, he ended where he should have begun, and marched the bulk of his troops towards the meadows on the bank of the Dwina. So far, Oudinot had kept his twelve-pounders and all his cavalry at this point, and they had taken no part in the fighting ; but now General Dulauloy of the artillery, fearing for his guns, came and proposed to the marshal to retire across the river not only the heavier pieces, but also the cavalry, under the plea that they would be in the way of the infantry movements. Oudinot asked Saint-Cyr what he thought ; but instead of giving the good advice to employ the artillery and cavalry on ground where they could easily manœuvre in support of the infantry, he replied with his eternal 'My lord marshal !' Finally, in defiance of the remarks of General Laurencez, his chief of staff, Oudinot ordered both arms to withdraw across the river.

This deplorable movement, which seemed to herald the total abandonment of Polotsk and the right bank, was infinitely displeasing to the troops who were removed, and affected the tone

of the infantry, who would have to defend the side of the town towards the meadows; while, on the other hand, the sight of ten cavalry regiments and several batteries leaving the field was a great stimulus to the Russians. Then, to carry disorder into this huge retreating mass, they promptly brought up their *unicorns*, the projectiles of which, being hollow, acted like round-shot, and then burst like shells. The regiments near mine had several men killed and wounded. I was fortunate enough to have none of my troopers touched, and only lost a few horses. The one which I was riding had his head smashed, and in the fall my wounded shoulder came heavily on the ground, causing me frightful pain. A trifle less slew in laying the Russian gun, the shot would have struck me full in the body, and my son would have been orphaned a few hours before his birth.

The enemy had now renewed the combat, and when we had crossed the bridge and turned our heads to see what was taking place on the bank we had left we witnessed a most affecting sight. The French infantry, with the Bavarians and the Croats, were fighting bravely, and having the best of it; but the Portuguese legion and the Swiss were flying before the Russians, and did not halt till they were knee-deep in the river. There, compelled to face the enemy or be drowned, they fought at last, and by a well-sustained file fire forced the Russians to give ground somewhat. The French artillery commander, who had just crossed the Dwina, cleverly seized the moment to be of service. Bringing his guns to the bank, and firing over the river, he smote the enemy's battalions on the other side. This powerful diversion stopped Wittgenstein in this quarter, and as the French, Bavarians, and Croats were elsewhere repulsing him, the fighting slackened, and for the last hour of the day degenerated into sharpshooting. But Marshal Oudinot could not hide from himself that he would have to begin again next day. Full of thought over a state of things of which he could not see the issue, and brought up at every turn by Saint-Cyr's obstinate refusal to speak, he was riding along at a walk, followed by a single aide-de-camp, among his infantry skirmishers, when the enemy's marksmen, noticing the horseman with white plumes, made him their target, and sent a bullet into his arm.

The marshal at once sent word to Saint-Cyr that he was wounded, and handed the command over to him. Leaving to him the task of getting things straight, he left the field, crossed the bridge, and, leaving the army, retired to Lithuania, to get his hurt tended. It was two months before we saw him again.

CHAPTER LXVII.

Saint-Cyr seized the reins of command with a firm and capable hand, and in a few hours the aspect of things changed entirely —so great is the influence of an able man who knows how to inspire confidence. Marshal Oudinot had left the army in a most alarming situation—part of the troops with the river at their backs, others scattered about beyond the gardens, and keeping up a disorderly fire; the ramparts badly furnished with guns; the streets of the town blocked with caissons, baggage wagons, and wounded, heaped together pell-mell; lastly, the troops had in case of defeat no other way of retreat than by the bridge of boats, which was very narrow, and six inches deep in water. Night was coming on, and the regiments of the different nations were so out of hand that it was quite possible for the sharpshooting to bring on a general action, which might be fatal to us.

General Saint-Cyr's first act was to call in the skirmishers. He was certain that the tired enemy would follow his example as soon as they were no longer attacked; and in fact the fire soon ceased on both sides. The troops could concentrate and take some rest, and business seemed to be put off until the next day. So that he might be in a position to engage with best chances of success, Saint-Cyr took advantage of the night to make his arrangements for repulsing the enemy, or securing his retreat in the event of a reverse. To this end he assembled the regimental commanders, and after having explained the dangers of the situation, the most serious of which was the crowded state of the town and of the approaches to the bridge, he gave orders that the colonels, with other officers and patrols, should go through the streets directing all the uninjured soldiers of their regiments to the bivouacs, and sending the sick and wounded and all led horses and wagons across the bridge. He added that at break of day he would go round the town and suspend any colonel who had not carried out his orders. No excuse would be accepted. The orders were quickly carried out, and all that was not required for the fight—all the impedimenta of the army, in short—was collected on the left bank. Soon the ramparts and streets, as well as the bridge, were completely

clear. The bridge was strengthened, the cavalry and artillery brought back to the right bank and established in the suburb furthest from the enemy. Finally, to facilitate his means of retreat, the prudent commander-in-chief had a second bridge, to be used only by infantry, constructed out of empty barrels and planks. All these preparations were finished before daylight, and the army awaited the enemy with confidence. But he remained inert in his bivouacs on the plain along the edge of the vast forest which surrounds Polotsk on the side away from the river. General Saint-Cyr, who had expected to be attacked in the early morning, ascribed the tranquillity in the Russian camp to their enormous loss on the previous day. This might have had something to do with it, but the principal cause of Wittgenstein's inaction arose from the fact that he was expecting a strong division of infantry and several squadrons from St. Petersburg by the next night, and had put off his attack till this reinforcement arrived, so that he might vanquish us with more ease on the morrow.

Although the great Polish landowners in the neighbourhood of Polotsk did not venture, for fear of compromising themselves with the Russians, to take sides openly with the French, they helped us in secret, and made no difficulty about finding us spies. General Saint-Cyr, in his anxiety as to the enemy's preparations, had asked one of these nobles to send him one of his most intelligent serfs. He sent several wagons of forage to the Russian bivouac, and among the wagoners placed his bailiff, dressed as a peasant. This person, a man of intelligence, chatted with Wittgenstein's soldiers, and learnt that a large body of troops was expected. He even witnessed the arrival of the Cossacks of the Guard, and of a squadron of 'gentlemen-guards,' and was told that several battalions would reach the camp towards midnight. Having got this information, the bailiff reported it to his master, who lost no time in imparting it to the French commander-in-chief. On receiving this news, Saint-Cyr resolved to beat Wittgenstein before the reinforcements came up ; but as he did not wish to enter upon too long an engagement, he warned the generals and colonels that he should not attack till six in the evening, so that night should set a term to the fighting, and that in case the Russians were successful they should not have time to follow it up. It is true that in the event of our getting the best of the fight we should be unable to pursue the enemy in the darkness, but this was not Saint-Cyr's purpose. He desired for the moment merely to give them a good lesson, and make them move further away

from Polotsk. Wishing to act by way of surprise, he gave orders that the most perfect quiet should be maintained in the town, and along the whole line of outposts.

We found the day very long: everyone, even the commander-in-chief, for all his coolness, had his watch constantly in his hand. Having noticed the day before that the retirement of the French cavalry had allowed the Russians to push our left wing back into the Dwina, General Saint-Cyr brought all his squadrons quietly, a moment before the attack, behind some large stone houses, beyond which the meadows began. On this level ground the cavalry were to act, charging the enemy's right and covering the left of our infantry, the two first divisions of which were to attack the Russian camp, while the third supported the cavalry, and the two last formed the reserve and guarded the town. All was ready when, at six in the evening, the general signal for the attack was given by cannon-shot. This was followed by the thunder of all the French artillery, the projectiles of which fell upon the outposts, even upon the camp of the enemy. Instantly our two leading divisions, the 26th Light Infantry in front, dashed upon the Russian regiments posted in the gardens, killed and captured all whom they could reach, and, putting the others to flight, pursued them to the camp, where they made many prisoners and captured several guns. The surprise, although in broad daylight, was so complete that General Wittgenstein was quietly dining in a small country house contiguous to his camp when he was warned that the French voltigeurs were in the courtyard. Jumping out of window, he found a Cossack pony at hand, got on its back, and fled with all speed to his main body. Our men took possession of the Russian general's horses, his papers, his wagons, and his wine, as well as his plate and the dinner on the table. Immense booty was also taken in the camp by other companies.

At the uproar of this unexpected attack panic seized the enemy. They fled in most cases without thinking of taking their arms. The disorder was complete, and meanwhile the approach of our infantry divisions was announced by a brisk fire, and the sound of drums beating the charge. Everything pointed to an immense success for the French troops, at whose head was marching Saint-Cyr, calm as usual. But in war an unforeseen and often unimportant incident changes the aspect of affairs. A great number of the enemy's soldiers had reached the rear of the camp in their flight. There was bivouacking the squadron of the 'gentlemen-guards,' which had arrived only

a few hours back. This force, composed of young men selected from the noblest families, was commanded by a major of tried courage, whose ardour, it was said, had recently been increased by copious libations. As soon as he learnt what was going on this officer mounted his horse, and, followed by 120 cavaliers, dashed upon the French. The first of our battalions whom he attacked belonged to the 26th. It offered a vigorous resistance, and the guards, repulsed with loss, were trying to rally to charge a second time in line, when their major, impatient at the time which it takes for horsemen in disorder to recover their ranks, left the French battalion which he could not break, and, ordering his men to follow him, launched them at full speed in loose order through the camp. He found it full of our allies, Portuguese, Swiss, and Bavarian infantry, some of whom, scattered by the very effect of their victory, were seeking to reassemble, while others were collecting the plunder which the Russians had abandoned. Of these, the guards killed and wounded a good many, until they began to retreat, at first in disorder, soon even in panic-stricken flight. In such cases soldiers take all of their own side who are running up to join them for the enemy; and in a cloud of dust the number of pursuers, often only a handful of men, appears immense. This was what happened here. The 'gentlemen-guards,' scattered over a wide space, and always coming on without looking behind them, looked to the fugitives like a huge body of cavalry; so that the disorder spread until it reached a Swiss battalion in the midst of which General Saint-Cyr had taken refuge, and by the pressure of the crowd he and his horse were overturned into a ditch. In his plain blue overcoat, with no mark of his rank, the general lay prostrate on the ground, and made no movement when the guards drew near, and they, thinking him dead, or taking him for some non-combatant official, passed on over the plain in pursuit. There is no knowing where the disorder would have stayed had not General Berckheim, with equal boldness and good sense, hurried up at the head of the 4th Cuirassiers and charged the Russian horsemen. They defended themselves bravely, but were nearly all killed or taken, their valiant major being among the slain. If the charge executed by this handful of men had been properly supported it would have been very effective; and this fine feat of arms performed by the 'gentlemen-guards' proved afresh that an attack by cavalry has the best chance of success when it is unexpected.

General Saint-Cyr, having been picked up by our cuirassiers, at once ordered all his infantry divisions forward, and attacked

the Russians before they had recovered from their disorder. Success was not for a moment doubtful — the enemy were beaten with the loss of many men and guns. While this infantry action was taking place before Polotsk, the fortunes of the left wing of our army in the meadows along the Dwina were as follows. As soon as the first cannon-shot gave the signal for action, our cavalry regiments, headed by Castex's brigade, moved rapidly to meet the enemy's squadrons which were advancing on us. A serious engagement appeared imminent, and General Castex kindly remarked to me that though I had been able, in spite of my wound, to command my regiment at Sivoshina and the Svolna, when I had only to face infantry and artillery fire, it did not follow that I could do so now, when we should be engaged with cavalry. I might find myself involved in a charge without the means of defending myself, since, as I could only use one arm, I could not hold both sabre and bridle; and he advised me, therefore, to stay for the moment with the infantry division posted in reserve. I felt that I could not accept this good-natured offer, and expressed so strongly my objection at being away from the regiment that the general yielded; but he had six of the bravest troopers placed close in rear of me, commanded by the intrepid Sergeant Prud'homme. Further, I had beside me the two adjutants, the regimental staff-sergeants, a trumpeter, and Fousse, my orderly, one of the best men in the regiment. Thus surrounded, and riding in front of the centre of a squadron, I was pretty well protected, and in the case of urgent necessity I could drop my reins and take up my sword, which hung to my wrist by its knot.

The meadow being large enough to hold two regiments in line, the 23rd and 24th formed the first line, General Corbineau's brigade, consisting of three regiments, forming the second, and the cuirassiers following as reserve. The 24th, which was on the left, had in front of it a regiment of Russian dragoons; my regiment was facing Cossacks of the guard, known by their red coats and the beauty of their horses. These, though they had arrived only a few hours before, seemed in no way fatigued. We advanced at a gallop, and as soon as we were within striking distance General Castex gave the word to charge. His brigade fell upon the Russians, and at the first stroke the 24th broke the dragoons opposed to them. My regiment met with more resistance from the Cossacks, picked men of large stature, and armed with lances fourteen feet long, which they held very straight. I had some men killed, a good many wounded; but when, at length, my troopers had pierced the bristling line of

steel, all the advantage was on our side. In a cavalry fight the length of lances is a drawback when their bearers have lost their order and are pressed closely by adversaries armed with swords which they can handle easily, while the lancers find it difficult to present the point of their poles. So the Cossacks were constrained to show their backs, and then my troopers did great execution and took many excellent horses.

As we were about to follow up our success our attention was drawn by a great uproar to our right, and we saw the plain covered with fugitives; it was just then that the 'gentlemen-guards' were making their vigorous charge. General Castex, deeming it unwise to advance further while our centre seemed to be retreating in confusion, ordered the recall to be sounded, and the brigade halted. But it had hardly re-formed, when the Cossacks, emboldened by what was taking place on the centre, and anxious to avenge their first defeat, returned to the charge and dashed madly on my squadrons, while the Grodno Hussars attacked the 24th. Repulsed at all points by Castex's brigade, the Russians brought up in succession their second and third lines, while General Corbineau supported us with the 7th and 20th Chasseurs and the 8th Lancers. A grand cavalry engagement ensued, in which each side experienced varying fortunes. Our cuirassiers were just coming up to take part in it, and the Russian cuirassiers were advancing also, when Wittgenstein, seeing that his infantry was beaten and hard pressed by ours, ordered his cavalry to retire; but it was too closely engaged to be able to effect a retreat easily. Indeed, Generals Castex and Corbineau, sure of support from the cuirassiers, were launching their brigades alternately at the Russian cavalry, who were being thrown into great disorder and losing heavily. General Saint-Cyr, having got beyond the forest, where our victorious divisions of infantry and cavalry were collected, and seeing that night was coming on, stopped the pursuit, and the troops returned to Polotsk and regained the bivouacs which they had left a few hours before.

During this bustling cavalry action my wound had caused me severe pain, especially when I had to put my horse into a gallop. My inability to defend myself often put me into a very awkward position, from which I should not have escaped had I not been surrounded by a group of brave men who never let me out of their sight. One time, when I was pushed by the combatants on to a section of Cossacks, I was obliged, in self defence, to let go my reins and take my sword. However, I had no need to use it, for the men of every rank who escorted

me, seeing their commander in danger, furiously attacked the Cossacks by whom I was surrounded, made many of them bite the dust, and put the rest to flight. My orderly, Fousse, killed three; Adjutant Joly, two. I returned, therefore, from this great fight safe and sound. I had wished to be present at it in person in order to put still more dash into my regiment, and to show that, so long as I could sit on my horse, I felt bound in honour to command it in the hour of danger. Officers and men were much pleased with my devotion, and, as you will see later when I come to speak of the disasters of the great retreat, the liking they had for me increased.

When cavalry meets cavalry the slaughter is much less than when it is opposed to infantry. Moreover, the Russian troopers are generally awkward in handling their weapons, and their leaders are not very competent in handling their men.[1] Thus, although at Polotsk my regiment had to do with the Cossacks of the guard, reputed among the best troops in the Russian service, its losses were not heavy. I had eight or nine killed, and some thirty wounded, but among the latter was Major Fontaine. This excellent and valiant officer was in the thick of the scuffle when his horse was killed. He was trying with the help of some of the men to get his feet disentangled from the stirrups, when a confounded Cossack officer, galloping into the middle of the group, lent dexterously over, and aimed a terrible blow at Fontaine, destroying his left eye, injuring the other, and splitting his nose. As, however, the Russian officer was going off, proud of his exploit, one of our men broke his back with a pistol-shot at six paces' distance, and thus avenged his major. I had M. Fontaine attended to as soon as possible, and he was placed in the Jesuit convent at Polotsk. Visiting him that evening, I was much struck with the brave soldier's resignation. With an eye quite destroyed, he was patiently enduring all the pain and inconveniences resulting from the almost total loss of sight. He was never again fit for active service, which was a great loss to the 23rd Chasseurs. He had belonged to the regiment since its formation, universally loved and esteemed, and I could sympathise with its loss. Left as I was, the only field-officer in the regiment, I had to see to the duties of all, which was a heavy task.

You will think that I have described too much in detail the various actions in which the 2nd corps was concerned; but I repeat what I have said before, that I enjoy the reminiscences

[1] [English readers will remember the heavy cavalry action at Balaclava.]

of the great wars in which I took part, and I speak of them with pleasure. I seem to be in the field, in the midst of my gallant companions, most of whom, alas! have now left this world.

But to return to the Russian campaign. Anyone but Saint-Cyr, after such heavy fighting, would have reviewed his troops, complimented them on their courage, and inquired into their wants; but that was not his way. The last shot had hardly been fired when Saint-Cyr went and shut himself in the Jesuit convent, where he spent all his days and part of his nights in—what do you suppose? Playing the fiddle! This was his master-passion, and nothing but the necessity of marching against the enemy could draw him from it. He left the task of placing the troops to Generals Laurencez and Wrede, who posted two divisions of infantry and the cuirassiers on the left bank of the Dwina. The third French and the two Bavarian divisions remained at Polotsk, where they were set to throw up a vast entrenched camp to serve as a base for the troops, who from this important point covered the left and rear of the Grand Army in its march towards Smolensk and Moscow. Corbineau's and Castex's brigades of light cavalry were placed two leagues in advance of the great camp on the left bank of the Polota, a small stream which joins the Dwina at Polotsk. My regiment was to bivouac near a village called Luchonski, the colonel of the 24th fixing himself a quarter of a league in rear of us. We stayed there two months, during the first of which we never went far away.

On hearing of Saint-Cyr's victory the Emperor sent him his marshal's baton. But instead of visiting his troops, the new marshal lived, if possible, more apart than ever. No one could approach the commander-in-chief, whence the soldiers nicknamed him 'the owl.' The numerous rooms of the convent would have been of great service for the wounded, but he would live there alone, and thought he had conceded a great deal when he allowed wounded field-officers to be put in the out-buildings. Even they were only allowed to remain forty-eight hours, after which they had to be moved into the town. The cellars were overflowing with provisions, but the marshal kept the keys, and not even the hospitals could get anything. I had much trouble in getting two bottles of wine for Major Fontaine. Strange to say, Saint-Cyr was most abstemious, and used scarcely any of the stores for himself. Two months later, when the French had to leave the place, after setting town and convent on fire, all these provisions, which the marshal would not distribute, became the prey of the Russians or of the flames.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

WHILE the events which I have just been recording had been taking place before Polotsk, the Emperor had stayed at Witebsk, and thence was directing the operations of his numerous army corps. Some military writers have blamed Napoleon for losing his time first at Wilna, where he stayed nineteen days, and then at Witebsk, where he passed seventeen; asserting that these thirty-six days might have been better employed, especially in a country where the summer is very short, and the rigours of winter begin to be felt by the end of September. The blame seems to be well-founded up to a certain point; but some extenuation may be found, first, in the hope which the Emperor had of seeing the Russians seek an understanding; secondly, by the necessity of concentrating the various corps which had been detached in pursuit of Bagration; and, lastly, because some rest had to be granted to the troops. In addition to their day's march they had every evening to go and seek provisions far from their bivouacs, since the Russians as they retired had burnt all stores, and it was impossible to distribute rations regularly to the French troops. Davout's corps was, however, for a long time a fortunate exception to this rule, since that marshal, who was no less great as an administrator than as a leader, had organised before the passage of the Niemen huge trains of small carts to follow his army. These carts, filled with biscuits, salted meat, and vegetables, were drawn by oxen, a certain number of which were slaughtered every evening. This, while assuring a supply of provisions, had a great effect in keeping the soldiers in their ranks.

The Emperor left Witebsk August 13, and placing the 2nd and 6th corps under the command of Saint-Cyr at Polotsk, he moved to Krasnoe, where part of the Grand Army was assembled in presence of the enemy. A battle was expected, but only a slight engagement took place with the Russian rear-guard, who were beaten and retreated nimbly. On the 15th, his *fête* day, the Emperor held a march past of the troops, who greeted him with enthusiasm. Next day the army came in sight of Smo-

lensk, called by the Russians 'the holy,' since they regard it as the key of Moscow and the palladium of their Empire. Ancient prophecies predicted great misfortunes to Russia whensoever she let Smolensk be taken. This superstition, studiously fostered by the Government, dates from the time the town marked the extreme frontier of the Muscovites.

King Murat and Marshal Ney were the first to arrive before Smolensk, and thought, for some reason which did not appear, that the enemy had abandoned the place. Their reports to the Emperor having made him adopt the same opinion, he gave orders for the advance-guard to be marched into the town. Ney, in his impatience, awaited no further orders. He advanced towards the gate with a feeble escort of hussars, when suddenly a regiment of Cossacks, masked by a fold in the ground and a thicket, dashed upon our troopers, drove them back and surrounded Marshal Ney, who was so close pressed that a pistol-bullet fired almost point-blank tore his coat collar. Luckily Domanget's brigade came up and relieved the marshal, and the arrival of General Razout's infantry permitted Ney to approach near enough to the town to convince himself that the Russians proposed to defend it.

Seeing that the ramparts were armed with a great number of guns, General Eblé of the artillery, a most able man, advised the Emperor to turn the place, by sending Prince Poniatowski's Polish corps to cross the Dnieper two leagues further up. But Napoleon, following the opinion of Ney, who assured him that Smolensk would be easily carried, gave the order to attack. Thereupon the corps of Davout, Ney, and Poniatowski made for the place from different sides. A murderous fire was opened from the ramparts, and this was not equal to that which came from the batteries on the high ground of the further bank. A sanguinary combat took place. Our troops were decimated by round-shot, grape, and shells, while our artillery could make no impression on the walls. At length, as night came on, the enemy, after disputing the ground valiantly foot by foot, was pushed back into Smolensk, and made ready to abandon it. But as they withdrew they set it on fire in various quarters, and thus the Emperor saw his hopes of taking a town which he had every reason to suppose was full of provisions vanish. Not till daybreak on the next morning did the French enter the place, the streets of which were heaped with corpses and smoking ruins. The capture of Smolensk had cost us 12,000 men, killed and wounded; and this huge loss we might have avoided by crossing the Dnieper, as General Eblé proposed, further up,

for in that case General Barclay de Tolly would have had to evacuate the place and retreat towards Moscow on pain of being cut off. After burning the bridge the Russians took up their position for the moment upon the high ground of the right bank, but soon retreated along the road to Moscow. Marshal Ney pursued them with his own corps, strengthened by Gudin's division and Davout's. A short distance from Smolensk he came up with the Russian army at Valutina, engaged in a defile, with all its baggage. The action developed into a real battle, which would have been fatal to the enemy if General Junot, who had accomplished the passage of the Dnieper too slowly at Prondichewo, two leagues above Smolensk, and halted there for forty-eight hours, had marched upon the sound of Ney's guns, only a league away from him. But, though warned by Ney, Junot did not stir. In vain did the Emperor's aide-de-camp, Chabot, bring him an order to join Ney; in vain did Gourgaud repeat the order. Junot remained immovable.

Meanwhile Ney, engaged with infinitely superior forces, had brought all his troops successively into action, and ordered Gudin's division to capture the formidable positions occupied by the Russians. The order was carried out in the most intrepid fashion, but in the very first attack the brave general fell mortally wounded. Yet always maintaining his wonderful coolness, he wished before he died to assure the success of the troops whom he had so often led to victory, and appointed General Gérard, though he was the junior major-general of the division, to succeed him in the command. Gérard at once placed himself at the head of the division, and by ten o'clock in the evening, after losing 1,800 men and slaying 6,000 of the enemy, he remained in possession of the field of battle, the Russians retiring in haste.

Next day the Emperor came to inspect the troops who had fought so valiantly. He distributed rewards freely, and confirmed Gérard in command of the division. General Gudin died a few hours later.

If Junot had chosen to take part in the fight he could have shut the Russian army into a narrow defile, where it would have been caught between two fires and compelled to lay down its arms, and this would have put an end to the war. Then people regretted King Jerome, who, though a poor general, would probably have come to the assistance of Ney, and everyone expected to see Junot severely punished. But he was the first officer in whom Napoleon had inspired a personal attachment, and he had followed him in every campaign from Toulon

to Russia; the Emperor liked him and forgave him—a misfortune, for it was becoming necessary to make an example.

As soon as the capture of Smolensk was known in Russia a universal outcry arose against General Barclay de Tolly. He was a German; the nation accused him of not conducting the war with sufficient vigour, and demanded a Muscovite general to defend the ancient Muscovy. The Emperor Alexander was forced to give way, and conferred the command-in-chief of all the armies on General Kutusoff: he was past his prime and a man of little ability, best known for having been defeated at Austerlitz. But he had the merit, in the circumstances a great one, of being a Russian of the old stock; which gave him much influence, both over the troops and over the mass of the people.

The French advance-guard, always pushing the enemy before it, had passed Dorogobush before the Emperor made up his mind to leave Smolensk. It was oppressively hot; they had to march on shifting sands; and the supply of food was insufficient for such a mighty assemblage of men and horses, for the Russians had left nothing behind them but burnt villages and farms. When the army entered Wiazma that pretty town was in flames, and so with Ghiat. The nearer they drew to Moscow the scantier grew the resources of the country. Men, and especially horses, began to die. In a few days cold rain succeeded the intolerable heat, and continued till September 4; autumn was coming on. The army was not more than six leagues from Mojaisk, the last town left to take before reaching Moscow, when a considerable increase was perceived in the strength of the enemy's rear-guard, and there was every sign that a great battle was at last going to be fought. On the 5th our advance was checked for a moment by a powerful Russian column strongly entrenched on a rising ground garnished with twelve guns. The 57th of the line, which in the Italian days the Emperor had surnamed 'The Terrible,' bravely maintained its reputation by capturing the enemy's redoubt and artillery. They were now on the ground where forty-eight hours later took place the battle which the Russians called *Borodino*, the French *la Moskova*.

On September 6 the Emperor issued a general order announcing a battle for the morrow. The army joyfully awaited the great day which was to end its misery, for the troops had received no rations for a month, each man living how he could. The final arrangements were made on both sides. For the Russians, Bagration commanded the left wing, 62,000 men; in the centre was the hetman Platoff, with his Cossacks, and 30,000

infantry in reserve; the right wing, consisting of 70,000 men, was under Barclay de Tolly, who, having been deposed from the chief command, had taken a secondary place. Kutusoff was commander-in-chief. To oppose his 162,000 men the Emperor Napoleon had barely 140,000 at his disposal. They were thus distributed: Eugène commanded the left, Davout the right, Ney the centre, Murat the cavalry, the guard was in reserve.

The battle was fought on September 7. The weather was overcast, and a cold wind raised clouds of dust. The Emperor, suffering terribly from headache, descended towards a kind of ravine, where he passed the greater part of the day in pacing about. From this spot he could see only a portion of the field, and to command the whole of it he had to ascend a neighbouring hillock. This he did only twice during the battle, and he has been reproached with inaction; but it must be remarked that at the point where he was with the reserve he was in a position to receive frequent reports as to what was taking place all along the line; while, if he had been always going from one wing to another over ground so broken, the aides-de-camp bringing important intelligence would not have known where to find him. It must be remembered, too, that he was unwell, and the icy wind, blowing with great force, prevented him from staying on horseback.

As I was not present at the battle of the Moskwa I refrain from entering into details of the manœuvres, and merely say that, after unparalleled efforts, the French obtained a victory over the Russians, whose resistance was most obstinate. Naturally, the battle reckons as one of the most bloody of this age. The losses of the two armies were calculated at 50,000. The French lost forty-nine generals, killed and wounded, and had 20,000 men disabled. The Russian loss was greater by a third. General Bagration, their best officer, was killed, and, by a strange chance, the ground on which the battle was fought was his property. The French took very few prisoners —a proof of the valour with which the vanquished fought.

Several interesting episodes occurred during the action. Thus, when the Russian left, twice broken by the efforts of Murat, Davout, and Ney, and rallying as often, was coming a third time to the charge, Murat sent General Belliard to the Emperor with a request that he would send part of his guard to complete the victory, as otherwise it would take a second battle to beat the Russians. Napoleon was inclined to comply with this request; but Marshal Bessières, who commanded the guard, said, 'Allow me to point out that your Majesty is at this

moment seven hundred leagues from France.' Whether this remark decided the Emperor, or he did not think the battle sufficiently developed to employ his reserve, he refused to do so. Two similar requests met with the same answer.

One of the most remarkable feats performed in this battle, so fertile of brave actions, was the following. The front of the enemy's line was covered by high ground, provided with redoubts, redans, and, above all, a loopholed fort armed with eighty guns. The French, after heavy loss, had carried all these works, but had been unable to hold their ground in the fort. General Montbrun, commanding the 2nd cavalry corps, observed by the aid of his telescope that the fort was not closed at the gorge, and that the Russian troops were entering by sections; while it was possible, by turning the high ground, to avoid the ramparts and the rocks, and bring the squadrons up to the gate by gently sloping ground practicable for horses. Accordingly, he proposed to enter the fort in rear with his cavalry, while the infantry attacked it in front. This daring suggestion was approved by Murat and the Emperor, and its execution entrusted to Montbrun. But while that fearless general was preparing for action he was killed by a cannon-ball—a great loss for the army—and the Emperor sent General Caulaincourt, brother to the grand equerry, to take his place. Then was seen something unprecedented in the annals of war: a fort defended by many guns and several battalions attacked and captured by a cavalry column. Caulaincourt, hastening on with a division of cuirassiers, the 5th regiment, under Colonel Christophe, leading, reached the entrance, made his way inside, and fell with a bullet through his head. Colonel Christophe and his cuirassiers avenged their general by putting part of the garrison to the sword. The fort remained in their hands, and the victory of the French was assured. In these days, with their insatiable thirst for promotion, people would be astonished if, after so fine a feat of arms, a colonel was not promoted. But under the Empire ambition was held in check; Christophe did not become a general for several years, and never expressed any dissatisfaction at the delay.

Although the Russians had been beaten, and forced to evacuate the field of battle, their commander-in-chief, Kutusoff, had the audacity to write to the Emperor Alexander that he had just won a great victory over the French. This misleading news reached St. Petersburg on the day of Alexander's *fête*, and caused the liveliest joy. *Te Deum* was sung, while Kutusoff was proclaimed the saviour of his country, and created field-marshal. But the truth was soon known, and joy turned to

mourning. Still, Kutusoff was a field-marshal, and he desired no more. Any other than the timid Alexander would have severely punished the falsehood; but he could not do without Kutusoff, who therefore remained in command of the army.

The Russians, in their retreat towards Moscow, were overtaken on the morning of the 8th at Mojaisk, and in the cavalry action which ensued General Belliard was wounded. [Napoleon stayed three days at Mojaisk to await despatches. One which had come the day before the battle had done much to cause his indisposition, for it announced the defeat of Marshal Marmont at Salamanca. Marmont was one of Napoleon's mistakes. They had been together at the college of Brienne, where Marmont's schoolboy successes had led the Emperor to credit him with more military talent than his performances justified. When he replaced Masséna in 1811 he gave out that he was going to beat Wellington. He was now vanquished and wounded, and but for General Clausel his army would have lost still more heavily. This catastrophe might have made the Emperor reflect that while he was invading Russia he was losing Spain. Major Fabvier, who brought the despatch, was wounded in the action on the great redoubt—a long way to come in search of a bullet!]

CHAPTER LXIX.

NAPOLEON left Mojaisk on September 12 and entered Moscow on the 15th. The great town was deserted, the governor, General Rostopchin, having made all the inhabitants go out. This Rostopchin, whom some would make a hero, was a barbarian who shrank from no means to make himself notorious. He had allowed a number of foreign traders to be killed by the populace; above all, some French domiciled in Moscow, whose only crime was that they were suspected of wishing for the arrival of Napoleon's troops. Some days before the battle of the Moskwa, the Cossacks having captured a hundred of the French sick, General Kutusoff sent them to the governor of Moscow. Without any pity for their sufferings, he left them without food for forty-eight hours, and then marched them through the streets, where several of the poor wretches died of hunger. Meanwhile the police-agents read a proclamation in which Rostopchin, to encourage the people, said that all the French were equally feeble, and would be as easily knocked over. At the end of this terrible procession the greater part of our soldiers who survived it were butchered by the populace, without any attempt on Rostopchin's part to stop it.

The beaten Russian troops only passed through Moscow, and went on to re-form thirty leagues further, towards Kalouga. King Murat followed them with infantry and cavalry, while the guard remained in the city, and Napoleon established himself in the Kremlin, the ancient palace of the Czars. All was apparently quiet, when, on the night of September 15, the French and German traders who had escaped the governor's search came and warned Napoleon's staff that the town was about to be set on fire. This was soon confirmed by a Russian police-agent, who could not make up his mind to execute the orders of his chief. He said that before leaving Moscow Rostopchin had set free the prisoners, and distributed to them torches made by English workmen. The incendiaries were in the palace awaiting the signal. The Emperor at once prescribed the most severe measures. The

streets were patrolled, and many brigands caught in the act of arson were killed. But it was too late; the fire burst out at different points, and spread all the more rapidly that Rostopchin had had all the pumps removed; so that in a short time Moscow was one fiery furnace. The Emperor left the Kremlin, and took refuge in the château of Peterskoe; only returned three days later, when the fire was beginning to burn itself out. I shall not enter into any details of the burning of Moscow, as the story has been told by several eye-witnesses, but will discuss later on the effects of this enormous catastrophe.[1]

Napoleon, misconceiving Alexander's situation, was always in hope of his coming to terms. At length, tired of waiting, he decided to write to him. Meanwhile the Russian army was being reorganised in the direction of Kalouga, whence it, commander sent officers towards Moscow to bring back to their regiments the stragglers, who were estimated at 15,000. These men had retired to the suburbs, and went about freely among our bivouacs, sitting at our soldiers' fires, and eating with them, without its occurring to anyone to make them prisoners. This was a mistake, for they gradually rejoined their army, while ours was growing weaker every day from sickness and the effects of the first cold weather. Our loss in horses, owing to the immense labour which Murat had throughout the campaign imposed on the cavalry, was enormous. Mindful of his brilliant successes against the Prussians in 1806 and 1807, he thought that cavalry could do anything, and march twelve or fifteen leagues a day, the only thing necessary being to bring the heads of his columns in contact with the enemy. But the conditions were much changed by the climate, the difficulty of getting forage, the length of the campaign, and, above all, Russian tenacity. Thus when we arrived at Moscow half the cavalry had no horses, and Murat destroyed the rest in the province of Kalouga. Proud of his stature and his courage, and always bedizened in strange but brilliant costumes, the prince had attracted the notice of the enemy, and liked to parley with them, exchanging presents with the Cossack

[1] [M. de Ségur writes: 'There was no longer any concealment of the fate to which Moscow was doomed. At night emissaries knocked at all the doors announcing the fire. The pumps had been removed, and none knew what to do. That day a terrible scene ended the sad drama. The prisons opened, and a filthy crowd issued tumultuously. From that day Moscow belonged neither to French nor Russians, but to this foul mob, whose rage was guided by police officers and men. They were organised, and his post assigned to each, and they dispersed, to let fire and pillage burst forth on all sides at once.']

leaders. Kutusoff took advantage of these meetings to keep up false hopes of peace, which were passed on from Murat to the Emperor. But one day the same enemy who said he was growing weak roused himself, slipped through our cantonments, and walked off with several baggage-trains, a squadron of dragoons of the guard, and a battalion of the line. From that time Napoleon forbad all communication with the Russians except by his authority.

He did not, however, lose all hope of peace. On October 4 he sent General Lauriston to Kutusoff's head-quarters. The cunning Russian showed Lauriston a letter from himself to the Emperor Alexander urging him to accept the French proposals, seeing, as he said, that the Russian army was in no state to continue the war. But hardly had the officer bearing this despatch started for St. Petersburg, furnished by Lauriston with a passport to guard him against attack from any of our people who were prowling between the two armies, when Kutusoff sent a second aide-de-camp to his Emperor. Having no French passport he was caught by our patrols, arrested as lawful prize, and his despatches sent to Napoleon. They contained the very opposite of what Kutusoff had shown to Lauriston. In fact, the Russian marshal, after begging his sovereign not to treat with the French, announced that Admiral Tchichagoff's army, having left Wallachia after peace made with the Turks, was advancing on Minsk to cut off Napoleon's retreat. He further informed Alexander of the conversation which he had been so diligently keeping up with Murat, in order to maintain the French in their mischievous security at Moscow at so advanced a season of the year. At sight of this letter Napoleon, perceiving that he had been tricked, burst into a violent rage, and, it is said, formed a plan of marching on St. Petersburg. But the weakness of his army and the rigours of winter were in the way of that expedition; and, moreover, he had important reasons for wishing to be near Germany, and in a better position for keeping an eye on it and on affairs in France. A conspiracy had broken out in Paris, and for one day its leaders had been in possession of the capital. General Malet, an excitable person, had thrown the spark which might have kindled a blaze; and if he had not been met by a man no less clear-headed than energetic, in the person of Laborde, it might have been all up with the Imperial Government. Even so the incident made a great impression, and Napoleon's grief at learning the danger in which his family and his ministers had been may be imagined.

Meanwhile his position at Moscow was growing daily more serious. The cold was already intense, and only those soldiers who were French by birth retained their spirit. But they were not the half of those whom Napoleon had led into Russia. The rest were Germans, Swiss, Croats, Italians, Spaniards, Portuguese. All these foreigners, who remained loyal so long as the army prospered, were beginning to grumble; Russian agents inundated our camps with proclamations in divers languages; and the men began to desert in great numbers under promise that they should be sent home. Besides this, the two wings of the Grand Army, composed solely of Austrians and Prussians, were no longer in line with the centre as when the campaign began, but were in our rear, ready to bar our road at a word from their sovereigns, the ancient and irreconcilable enemies of France. The position was most critical; and, bitter as it was to Napoleon's pride, by withdrawing before he had imposed peace on Alexander, to admit to the whole world that he had missed the aim of his expedition, the word 'retreat' was at last spoken. Not yet, however, had the Emperor or the marshals or anyone any idea of leaving Russia and recrossing the Niemen; it was only a question of taking up winter quarters in some of the least uncomfortable provinces of Poland.

The evacuation of Moscow was thus practically settled; but, before making up his mind to carry it out, Napoleon, with some last hope of an understanding, sent Caulaincourt, the Duke of Vicenza, to Marshal Kutusoff, but got no reply. During this delay our army was melting away daily, while in blind confidence our outposts were left exposed in the province of Kalouga. Suddenly an unexpected event occurred, to open the eyes of the most incredulous, and destroy any hopes which the Emperor might retain on the subject of peace.

General Sébastiani, whom we saw allowing himself to be surprised at Druia, had replaced Montbrun in command of the 2nd cavalry corps. Close to the enemy as he was, he passed his days in slippers reading Italian poetry and never reconnoitring. Kutusoff took advantage of this, and on October 18 marched on Sébastiani's corps, surrounded it, overwhelmed it by superior numbers, and compelled it to abandon part of its artillery. The three cavalry divisions only succeeded in rejoining Murat's troops by cutting down several battalions of the enemy who tried in vain to oppose their passage. Sébastiani, who was brave enough, displayed much courage in the fight; but as a general he may be noted for mediocrity. When we come to the campaign of 1813 you will have further proof of it.

Simultaneously with this surprise of Sébastiani, Kutusoff attacked Murat all along his line; and the prince himself was slightly wounded. The Emperor heard of the affair the same day; also that 10,000 cavalry from the army of Wallachia had been permitted by our allies the Austrians to reach the enemy's camp. Thereupon he ordered that the retreat should begin next day.

On the morning of October 19 the Emperor left Moscow. He had entered it on September 15. He himself, with the Old Guard and the main body of the army, took the road to Kalouga. Marshal Mortier and two divisions of the Young Guard stayed for twenty-four hours in the city to complete its ruin by blowing up the Kremlin, with orders to bring up the rear. The army was followed by more than 40,000 vehicles, which blocked the defiles. When this was remarked to the Emperor he said that each of them would save two wounded, and would feed several men, while they would gradually be got rid of. This philanthropic system seems to me open to objection; for the need of lightening the march of an army in retreat appears to take precedence of all other considerations.

While the French were at Moscow, King Murat and his cavalry had been occupying part of the province of Kalouga, but had not taken the town of that name, the neighbourhood of which is very fertile. The Emperor, wishing to avoid passing the battlefield of the Moskwa, and taking the Mojaisk road, the resources of which the army had already exhausted, took the line of Kalouga. From this he hoped to reach Smolensk through a fertile and unexhausted district. But, after several days' march, our troops, which, since Murat had rejoined them, amounted still to over 100,000 men, found themselves in presence of the Russian army, occupying the little town of Malo-Jaroslavitz. The enemy's position was exceedingly strong, but the Emperor none the less ordered Eugène to attack it with the Italian corps and the divisions of Morand and Gérard. Nothing could stay the dash of our troops, and they took the town after a long and murderous engagement, which cost us 4,000 men killed and wounded. General Delzons, a most deserving officer, was among the killed. Next day, October 24, the Emperor, astounded by the brisk resistance by which he had been met, and knowing that the whole Russian army blocked his road, halted his troops, and spent three days in considering what steps he should take.

During a reconnoissance Napoleon was on the verge of being captured by the enemy. It was a thick fog. Suddenly

the shouts of 'Hourra! hourra!' were heard, and a number of Cossacks issued from a wood near the road. They crossed the road twenty paces from the Emperor, overturning and spearing all whom they met as they passed. But General Rapp, dashing forward at the head of two squadrons of chasseurs and mounted grenadiers of the guard, put the enemy to flight. In this fight M. le Couteulx, my old comrade on Lannes' staff, now Prince Berthier's aide-de-camp, having armed himself with the lance of a Cossack whom he had slain, was imprudent enough to return brandishing the weapon. It was the more imprudent that he had on a furred pelisse and cap, under which the French uniform could not be seen. Accordingly, a grenadier, taking him for a Cossack officer, and seeing him make for the Emperor, pursued him, and ran him through with his gigantic sabre. In spite of this frightful wound Le Couteulx survived both the cold and the fatigues of the retreat, and got back to France, travelling in one of the Emperor's carriages.

Napoleon, having assured himself by reconnoissances that it was impossible to continue his march towards Kalouga, except by fighting a sanguinary battle against Kutusoff's numbers, decided to regain Smolensk by way of Mojaisk. So the army left a fertile region to follow a route which they had devastated and had traversed in September amid blazing villages and heaps of corpses. The nature of the Emperor's movement, which resulted in bringing him, after ten days' hard work, to a point only twelve leagues from Moscow, made the troops very anxious as to the future. The weather became fearful; and after blowing up the Kremlin, Marshal Mortier rejoined the Emperor. Again the army beheld Mojaisk and the battlefield of the Moskwa. The ground was furrowed by cannon-balls and covered with débris of every kind, and 30,000 corpses half-devoured by wolves. The soldiers and the Emperor passed quickly, casting a sad look on this vast charnel-house.

In the first edition of his work on the campaign M. de Ségur says that as they passed the battlefield they saw an unhappy Frenchman, who, having had both his legs smashed in the fight, had packed himself into the body of a dead horse and had lived there for fifty days, using the flesh of the animal both to feed himself and to dress his wounds. It was pointed out to him that the man would have been stifled by the gases of decomposition, and that he would probably have preferred to cover his wounds with fresh earth, or even with grass, than to make them worse by bringing them into contact with putrid flesh. I only make this remark to put the reader on his guard against the

exaggerations of a book the success of which was largely owing to its brilliant style.

Beyond Wiazma the march of the army was delayed by snowstorms and an icy wind. Many of the carriages were left behind, and thousands of men and horses perished from cold; the flesh of the horses supplied food to the soldiers, and even to the officers. The rear-guard passed from the command of Davout to that of Eugène, and finally came under Ney, who discharged this laborious duty for the rest of the campaign. Smolensk was reached on November 1. Napoleon had ordered a great quantity of provisions and clothing to be collected in that town; but the commissaries in charge, knowing nothing of the state of disorganisation into which the army had fallen, would not distribute them without regular orders and the formalities usual under ordinary circumstances. These delays irritated the soldiers, dying as they were of hunger and cold. They broke into the store-houses and possessed themselves of the contents, so that many men got too much, some not enough, others nothing.

So long as the march of the troops was orderly the mixture of different nations had given rise only to slight inconvenience; but when misery and fatigue had broken up the ranks, discipline was at an end. How could it exist in an immense body of isolated individuals lacking everything, going along on their own account, and not understanding each other? A veritable confusion of tongues reigned in that disorderly mass. Some regiments, notably that of the guard, still held out. The troopers of the line regiments had lost nearly all their horses, and were formed into battalions. The officers who still were mounted composed the *sacred* squadrons, the command of which was entrusted to Generals Latour-Maubourg, Grouchy, and Sébastiani. They did the duties of mere captains, while major-generals and colonels acted as sergeants and corporals. An organisation like this would, of itself, be sufficient to show to what extremities the army was reduced.

The Emperor had reckoned upon a strong division of troops of all arms, which General Baraguey d'Hilliers was to bring to Smolensk; but when they got near the town they learnt that that general had surrendered to a Russian column on the understanding that he alone should not be made prisoner, but be allowed to go and join the French army to explain his conduct. The Emperor, however, would not see him, but ordered him to return to France and consider himself under arrest until he could be tried by court martial. Baraguey d'Hilliers anticipated

their judgment by dying of grief at Berlin. He had been one of Napoleon's mistakes. He had taken his fancy in the days of the Boulogne camp by promising to train the dragoons to serve as infantry or cavalry alike; but this system was tried in Austria during the campaign of 1805, and the veteran dragoons, dismounted and commanded by Baraguey d'Hilliers in person, were beaten at Werthingen under the Emperor's eyes. Their horses were given back to them, but they were beaten again, and for several years this arm felt the disorder into which Baraguey had thrown it. Having fallen into disgrace, he hoped to retrieve himself by asking leave to come to Russia, and there ruined himself finally in the Emperor's favour, by capitulating without fighting, and violating the decrees which ordered the commander of a surrendered corps to share the fate of his troops and forbad him to ask for conditions favourable to himself alone.

After several days' halt at Smolensk to allow the stragglers to come up, the Emperor went on the 15th to Krasnoe, and thence sent an officer to the 2nd army corps on the Dwina, in which now his only hope of safety resided. The regiments composing this corps had undergone less fatigue and privation than those which had taken part in the march to Moscow; but, on the other hand, they had encountered the enemy much more frequently. Napoleon wished to reward them by appointing them to all the vacant posts, and had all the recommendations for promotion brought to him. There were several in my favour, one of which asked only for the rank of *major* (lieutenant-colonel) for me. The secretary happened to present this one, and I have it from General Grundier, who, having been ordered to bring these despatches, was at the moment in the Emperor's room, that Napoleon when signing struck out the word *major* and substituted colonel, remarking, 'I am discharging an old debt.' So at last I became colonel of the 23rd Chasseurs. It was November 15, but I did not hear of it till some time afterwards.

The retreat continued painfully, and the enemy, with ever-increasing numbers, separated Prince Eugène's corps from the army, and also those of Davout and Ney. The first two succeeded with much difficulty in cutting their way through and getting back to the Emperor, who was in a state of painful anxiety about Ney's corps, several days having passed without any news of it. On November 19 Napoleon reached Orcha. A month had passed since he had left Moscow, and he was still 120 leagues from the Niemen; the cold was intense.

While the Emperor was agitated by gloomy uncertainty as

to the fate of the rear-guard and its intrepid leader, Ney was performing one of the most brilliant feats of arms recorded in military annals. Leaving Smolensk on the 17th after blowing up the ramparts, the marshal had hardly started when he was assailed by myriads of the enemy, who attacked him on both flanks, in front, and in rear. Continually beating them off, Ney marched through their midst for three days ; but he found himself checked at length by the dangerous passage of the Krasnoe ravine, beyond which could be seen a strong body of Russian troops, with a formidable artillery, which opened a brisk and well-maintained fire. Undismayed by this unforeseen obstacle, the marshal took the bold resolve of forcing the passage, and ordered the 48th of the line, commanded by Masséna's old aide-de-camp, Colonel Pelet, to charge with the bayonet. At the sound of Ney's voice the French soldiers, worn out as they were with fatigue and want, and numbed with the cold, dashed forward and carried the Russian batteries. The enemy recovered them, and our troops drove them out again, but they had at last to yield to numbers. The 48th was cut to pieces by grape-shot, and in great part destroyed. Out of 650 men who entered the ravine, 100 only came back, Colonel Pelet, severely wounded, being of the number. Night came on, and all hope of the rear-guard rejoining the army appeared to be lost. But Ney had confidence in his troops, and above all in himself. By his orders numerous lines of fires were kindled so as to hold the enemy in their camp, in fear of a fresh attack on the morrow. The marshal had resolved to place the Dnieper between him and the Russians, and to entrust his destiny and that of his troops to the frail ice of the river. His only doubt was as to the road which he ought to take in order to reach the Dnieper as soon as possible. Just then a Russian colonel, coming from Krasnoe, presented himself as a flag of truce, and summoned Ney to lay down his arms. At the thought of such humiliation the marshal's anger burst forth, and, as the officer bore no written orders, Ney declared that he did not consider him as a flag of truce, but as a spy, and that he would have him bayoneted if he did not guide them to the nearest point of the Dnieper. The Russian colonel was compelled to obey, and Ney instantly gave orders to leave the camp in silence. Artillery, caissons, baggage, and wounded were abandoned, and, favoured by the darkness, he reached the banks of the Dnieper after four hours' march.

The river was frozen, but not hard enough to be practicable at all points, for there were many cracks and places where the

ice was so thin that it gave way when several crossed at once. The marshal therefore made the soldiers cross in single file, and the passage of the river thus accomplished, Marshal Ney's troops deemed themselves in safety. But by the dawning light they perceived a large bivouac of Cossacks. The hetman, Platoff, was in command then, and as, according to his habit, he had been drinking all night, he was at that moment asleep. Now discipline is so strict in the Russian army, that no one dared to awake the chief, nor stand to arms without his order. The fragments of Ney's corps therefore edged along a league from the hetman's camp without being attacked ; nor did they see any more of Platoff's Cossacks till the next day. For three days Marshal Ney marched, fighting incessantly, along the winding banks of the Dnieper, to Orcha, and on the 20th came in sight of the town. He hoped to find the Emperor and the army there ; but between him and it there still lay a wide plain, occupied by a strong body of the enemy's infantry, which was advancing on him, the Cossacks, meanwhile, preparing to attack his rear. Taking up a defensible position, he sent several officers, one after another, to make sure that the French were still in Orcha ; since otherwise further resistance would be of no avail. One of them reached the place, and found the head-quarters still there. On learning that Ney had returned the Emperor evinced the greatest joy, and in order to deliver him from his dangerous situation he sent Eugène and Mortier to meet him. They repulsed the enemy, and brought Marshal Ney, with what remained of the brave men under his command, back to Orcha. This retreat did Ney the greatest credit.

That day the Emperor continued his retreat by Kokanoff and Toloczin, to Bobra, where he found Marshal Victor's troops lately arrived from Germany, and came into touch with the 2nd corps, the command of which Saint-Cyr had just handed back to Oudinot.

CHAPTER LXX.

As it is important to explain the reasons which had brought the 2nd corps back to the main body of the army, from which it had been separated since the beginning of the campaign, I must resume the summary of its history from the month of August. At that time, after having beaten the Russians before Polotsk, Marshal Saint-Cyr had formed a vast entrenched camp near that place, garrisoning it with some of his troops, and distributing the rest about both banks of the Dwina. The light cavalry covered the cantonments, and, as I have said, Castex's brigade, including my regiment, was placed at Luchonski on the Polota, whence we were able to watch the main roads coming from Sebesh and Nevel. Wittgenstein's army after its defeat had retired behind those towns, so that between the Russians and the French there was a space of more than twenty-five leagues. This was not regularly occupied, but both sides sent cavalry to reconnoitre it, which gave rise to sundry skirmishes. As in the neighbourhood of Polotsk there was abundant forage, the crops still standing, the soldiers, knowing that we should stay there for some time, set to work to reap and thresh the corn, grinding it afterwards in the little hand-mills, such as are found in every peasant's house. This appeared to me to be slow work, and I caused two water-mills on the Polota to be repaired, from which time my regiment was sure of its bread. As for meat, the woods were full of beasts abandoned by their owners; but since providing ourselves from these meant a daily hunt, I resolved to imitate a practice which I had seen with the Army of Portugal, and to form a regimental herd. I succeeded in a short time in getting together 700 or 800 beasts, putting them under the care of some dismounted chasseurs, whom I supplied with some of the horses of the country, which were too small to be drafted into the ranks. I increased my herd by frequent raids, and it existed for several months, so that I was able to give the regiment as much meat as they wanted, and keep my troops, who were grateful for my care, in good health. I also looked after the horses, for which large sheds were constructed,

thatched with straw and placed in the rear of the soldiers' huts, so that our bivouac was almost as comfortable as a camp in time of peace. The other colonels made similar arrangements, but none of them collected a herd, their soldiers living from hand to mouth.

While the French, Croat, Swiss, and Portuguese regiments worked unceasingly at improving their position, the Bavarians alone took no steps to escape from sickness and want. In vain did General Wrede try to stimulate their energy by pointing out the activity with which the French soldiers were constructing huts, harvesting, threshing, grinding, and baking; the poor Bavarians, wholly demoralised since they had ceased to receive rations, admired the intelligent work of our troops without trying to imitate them. Thus they died like flies, and not one would have survived if Marshal Saint-Cyr, giving up his habitual indolence for a moment, had not bidden the colonels of the other divisions to supply the Bavarians every day with bread, while the light infantry fetched cattle for them. Yet these Germans, so slack when it was necessary to work, were brave enough before the enemy, but as soon as the danger was over they relapsed into utter apathy. Home-sickness took possession of them; they crawled to Polotsk, and making for the hospitals which the care of their chiefs had established, they asked for 'the room where people die,' lay down on the straw, and never got up again. In this way a great number perished, and things came to such a point that General Wrede was obliged to place in his baggage wagon the colours of several battalions which had no longer men enough to guard them. Yet we were in September, and so far the weather was mild; the other troops were in good condition and lived merrily while awaiting future events. The troopers of my regiment were especially noticed for their good health, which I attributed in the first place to the quantity of bread and meat which I gave them, and still more to the plentiful supply of spirits which I was able to obtain by an arrangement with the Jesuits of Polotsk. Those kind fathers, all French, had a large farm at Luchonski with a distillery of corn brandy, but on the approach of war the workmen had all fled to the monastery, taking their stills and apparatus, so that the manufacture had stopped, and the brethren had lost part of their income. Meanwhile the assemblage of the army about the town had made alcohol so scarce and so dear that the canteen-men made several days' journey to Wilna to fetch it. It occurred to me then to make a treaty with the Jesuits, under which I was to protect their distillers, and make my soldiers

provide the necessary corn, on condition that my regiment should have every day a share of the resulting brandy. My proposal was accepted; the monks derived great profit from the sale of their spirit in the camp, and I was able to serve it out three times a day to my men, who, since they crossed the Niemen, had drunk nothing but water.

I know that these details seem at first sight superfluous, but I recall them with pleasure, because the care which I took of my men saved the lives of many of them, and kept the effective strength of the 23rd Chasseurs far above that of any other cavalry regiment in the army corps. This gained me a testimony of the Emperor's satisfaction, of which I will speak later on. I took two other precautions which saved the life of many of my troopers: the first was compelling them all to provide themselves with sheepskin overcoats, such as were to be found in plenty in the deserted villages. Soldiers are big children, and one has to take care of them in spite of themselves. My men declared at first that these greatcoats were useless and overweighted their horses; but by the time that October began they were very glad to put them under their cloaks, and when the great cold came on they thanked me for compelling them to keep them. My second precaution was to send to the rear of the army all troopers who had lost their horses by the enemy's fire, or by breaking down. There was a general order that all such men were to be sent to Lepel, in Lithuania, where they were to receive horses that were expected from Warsaw. I was preparing to obey this order, when I heard that the depôt at Lepel was choked with dismounted troopers in great want, and having nothing to do, since no remounts had arrived. I therefore took it upon myself to send all my dismounted men direct to Warsaw under the command of Captain Poitevin, who had been wounded. I knew quite well that I was contravening the regulations, but in an immense army transported to such a distance, and placed in such unusual circumstances, it was physically impossible that the administrative staff could attend to the requirements of the troops. It was therefore necessary for a regimental commander often to act on his own responsibility; so General Castex, who could not give me an official authorisation, promised to wink at what was going on, and I continued as far as possible to act on this principle, until the troopers whom I sent to Warsaw gradually amounted to 250. After the campaign I picked them up on the Vistula, all newly clothed, well equipped, and with excellent horses, and they formed a capital reinforcement for the regiment. The dis-

mounted men from other regiments who were collected at Lepel to the number of more than 9,000, overtaken by the retreat of the troops on the way from Moscow, were nearly all taken prisoners or died of cold on the road; yet it would have been easy to have sent them during the summer and autumn to Warsaw, where there were in the depôt plenty of horses only wanting riders.

I had a good month's rest at Luchonski, which helped forward the cure of the wound that I had received in July at Jakobowo. In that camp we were well off from a material point of view, but very uneasy about what was going on in the direction of Moscow, and we very seldom got news from France. At length I received a letter from my dear Angélique, in which she announced that she had given birth to a boy. Great as was my joy it was mingled with sadness, for I was far from my family, and though I did not foresee all the dangers to which I was shortly to be exposed, I could not hide from myself that there were great obstacles in the way of our meeting again.

Towards the middle of September Marshal Saint-Cyr sent me on a very delicate errand. Its end was twofold: first to find out what the enemy was doing in the neighbourhood of Nevel, and then to return by the shores of Lake Ozerichtchi and speak with Count Lubenski, the greatest noble of the country, and one of the few Poles who were ready to do anything to shake off the Russian yoke.

The Emperor, who, while hesitating to proclaim the restoration of the old Poland, had wished to organise the parts already occupied into departments, had met with much opposition from the nobles to whom he had proposed to entrust the administration of them. However, after the assurances which he had received as to the patriotism of Count Lubenski, he had appointed him prefect of Witebsk. As he lived on an estate lying outside of the districts occupied by the French, it was difficult to get the announcement of his nomination to him, and Napoleon had therefore given orders that a body of light cavalry should be sent his way. The duty of carrying out this task having fallen to me, I picked 300 of the bravest and best-mounted men of my regiment, and, after duly victualling them, departed on September 14 from the camp at Luchonski, leaving there Castex's brigade and the rest of our squadrons. I took Lorenz with me to act as interpreter.

Partisan warfare is dangerous and very laborious. Avoiding high roads; hiding by day in the forest without daring to light a fire; getting food and forage in some hamlet, and going

some leagues away to consume it, so as to get the better of the enemy's spies; marching all night, and sometimes towards a point other than that which we were really making for; being for ever on the alert—such was the life which I led from the moment when I was launched with only 300 men into a vast and unknown region, ever getting further from the French and nearer to the Russians, with a chance of meeting strong bodies of them. My position was difficult; but I trusted to my luck and the courage of my troopers, and advanced steadily, keeping always two or three leagues to one side of the road from Polotsk to Nevel by Tomchino.

I need not relate in detail the incidents of no great interest which befel us; it will suffice to say that, thanks to the good counsel given us by the peasants, who were opposed to the Russians, we went all round the town of Nevel, avoiding the enemy's outposts, and after marching eight days, or rather eight nights, reached Lake Ozerichtchi, on the shores of which stood the handsome château belonging to Count Lubenski. I shall never forget our arrival at that ancient and immense mansion. A lovely autumn evening was lighted up by the moon. The count's family were assembled to celebrate his birthday and rejoice over Napoleon's success at the Moskwa, when the servants ran in announcing that the house was surrounded by soldiers, who had set outposts and sentinels, and were already entering the courtyards. They thought it was the Russian police come to arrest their master. He, being a man of courage, was calmly awaiting his removal to the prisons of St. Petersburg, when one of his sons, having opened a window through curiosity, remarked: 'Those troopers are talking French.' At these words Count Lubenski with his family and servants rushed out of the house. He assembled them under a large portico, and as I mounted the steps came towards me with open arms, exclaiming in tragic tones: 'Welcome, generous Gaul, bringing liberty to my country, so long oppressed! Come, warrior of the great Napoleon, Poland's liberator, let me press thee to my heart!' Not only did the count embrace me; he insisted on the countess, his sons, and daughters doing the same. Then the chaplain, the tutors, the governesses kissed my hand, and the servants touched my knee with their lips. Astonished as I was at the various grades of honour which were rendered me, I received them with all the gravity at my command, and I imagined the scene at an end, when, at a word from the count, all fell prostrate in prayer.

We entered the château, and handing Count Lubenski his

appointment as prefect of Witebsk bearing the seal of the Emperor of the French, I asked if he accepted it.

'Yes,' he cried vigorously, 'and I am all ready to follow you.' The countess was no less enthusiastic, and it was settled that the count should start with me. I allowed an hour to prepare for the journey, which I need not say that my detachment employed in making a good supper, though in our fear of being surprised they were obliged to eat on horseback. Having taken our leave, we went four leagues further and slept in a forest, where we lay hidden all the next day. On the following night we continued our march; but in order to put the enemy, who might have been surprised at the presence of a French detachment in these regions, off the scent I carefully avoided taking the same road as I had followed when coming, and reached Polotsk in five days by way of Lombrowka, sometimes following paths, sometimes going across country. I was all the more thankful that I had returned by a different road when I learnt from some traders belonging to Nevel that the Russians had sent a regiment of dragoons and 600 Cossacks to look out for me, about the head waters of the Drissa, towards Krasnopoli.

After reporting to Marshal Saint-Cyr, and presenting Count Lubenski to him, I returned to our bivouac at Luchonski, where I found General Castex and the rest of my regiment. My expedition had lasted thirteen days, during which we had incurred much fatigue and some privation, but I brought my people back in good condition. We had not had to fight, for such small bodies of the enemy as we had seen had all taken flight at the sight of us.

During our journey I had been in a position to form an opinion with regard to Count Lubenski. He was a well-educated and able man, patriotic above all things, but his judgment was sometimes led astray by his enthusiasm when it was a question of choosing the means of the reconstitution of Poland. If, however, all his compatriots had shared his ardour, and taken up arms on the coming of the French, Poland might, perhaps, have recovered her independence in 1812; but they remained, with very few exceptions, utterly apathetic.

After leaving Polotsk the count went to take possession of his prefecture. He did not hold it long, for a month had hardly lapsed, when the French army was passing through the province of Witebsk in its retreat. Thus compelled to resign his prefecture and withdraw from the vengeance of the Russians, Count Lubenski took refuge in Galicia, where he had large possessions. He lived there peaceably till 1830, at which time

he returned to Russian Poland when it was in arms against the Czar. What befel Count Lubenski during and after this rising I do not know. Several of his compatriots assured me that he retired again to Galicia. He was a great patriot and an excellent man.

A few days after our return to Luchonski I was much surprised to see a detachment of thirty troopers of my regiment arrive from France. They came from Mons, and had thus crossed Belgium, the Rhine provinces, all Germany, part of Prussia and Poland, and travelled more than 400 leagues under the command of a sergeant; yet not a man had stayed behind, and not a horse was injured. This will serve to show the zealous spirit which animated the 23rd Chasseurs.

About October 12 the 2nd corps, which had been for two months living in abundance and tranquillity at Polotsk and the neighbourhood, had to get ready to take its chance of more fighting. We learnt that Admiral Tchichagoff, commanding the army of Wallachia, having through English mediation made peace with the Turks, was making for Mohileff with the view of falling on the Emperor's rear, while he was still at Moscow, and still lulling himself with the hope of making a treaty with Alexander. People were astonished that Prince Schwarzenberg, whose duty it was with 30,000 Austrians to watch the army of Wallachia, should have let Tchichagoff pass, but it was no less the fact. Not only had the Austrians omitted to close the way, as they might have done, to the Russians, but they had, instead of following them up, remained quiet in their cantonments in Volhynia. Napoleon had counted too much on the good faith of his father-in-law's ministers and generals, when he entrusted to them the duty of covering the right wing of the Grand Army. In vain does Count de Ségur seek to palliate the offence of the Austrian Government and Prince Schwarzenberg—their treachery was flagrant and history will brand their conduct.

While the Austrians on our right were opening the way to the Russian army coming from Turkey, the Prussians, who had so imprudently been allowed to form our left wing, were also preparing to make terms with the enemy; and that almost openly, without any concealment from Marshal Macdonald, whom the Emperor had put at their head to keep them to their allegiance. As soon as they learnt that the occupation of Moscow had not led to peace, they foresaw the disasters of the French army, and all their hatred towards us awoke. They did not yet rebel openly, but Marshal Macdonald could not get his

orders well obeyed, and the Prussians, who were cantoned near Riga, might at any moment join Wittgenstein's troops and overwhelm the French army encamped near Polotsk. It is clear how difficult Marshal Saint-Cyr's situation became, but this did not disturb him, and with his usual coolness he gave, calmly and clearly, his orders for an obstinate defence. The infantry was concentrated in the town and the entrenched camp, while several more bridges were thrown across the Dwina. The sick and the non-combatants were placed in old Polotsk and Ekimania, fortified positions on the left bank. The marshal, not thinking that he had troops enough to dispute the plain with Wittgenstein, who had just been strongly reinforced from St. Petersburg, deemed it best to keep only five squadrons, and took one from each regiment of light cavalry, while the remainder crossed the river. On October 16 the enemy's scouts appeared before Polotsk. They must have found its appearance much changed on account both of the huge entrenched camp and of the numerous works with which the plain was covered. The largest and strongest of these was a redoubt called La Bavaroise. All those of Wrede's unfortunate soldiers who had not died of home-sickness asked leave to defend this redoubt, and did it very valiantly.

The battle began on the 17th, and lasted all day. Marshal Saint-Cyr's position could not be forced, and General Wittgenstein, in his anger attributing this check to the fact that his officers had not sufficiently reconnoitred the strength of our defensive works, thought fit to inspect them himself, and approached them with great boldness. But this devoted action went near to cost him his life, for Major Curély, one of the best officers in the French army, having caught sight of the Russian general, dashed upon him at the head of the squadron of the 20th Chasseurs, sabred part of his escort, and, making up to Wittgenstein, forced him at the sword's point to surrender his own. After this important capture of the enemy's commander-in-chief, Major Curély should have promptly retired and brought his prisoner into the entrenched camp, but he was too impetuous, and seeing that the Russian general's escort was returning to the charge in order to set him free, he thought that French honour was involved in his keeping his prisoner in spite of every effort on the enemy's part. Thus Wittgenstein found himself for some minutes in the middle of a group contending for the possession of his person, but Curély's horse was killed, and several of our chasseurs leapt down to pick up their commander. Then Wittgenstein, taking advantage

of the confusion, made off at full gallop, ordering his men to follow.

This episode, which was soon known throughout the army, gave rise to a lively controversy. Some declared that Curély's moderation in not striking Wittgenstein should have come to an end at the moment when the Russians, returning to the fight, were on the point of setting their general free, and they maintain that Curély ought then to have run him through. But others held that, having accepted the Russian general's surrender, Curély had no longer any right to kill him. There may be some truth in this last argument, but for it to be perfectly sound General Wittgenstein should, after the example of the knights of old, have constituted himself a prisoner, rescue or no rescue. It seems, however, that he had not entered into any such engagement, or else that he broke it, seeing that he escaped as soon as he saw a chance. Had he the right to do so? That is a question very difficult to settle. So is also that respecting Curély's alleged right to kill Wittgenstein while they were trying to recapture him. Anyhow, when Curély was afterwards presented to the Emperor, during the passage of the Beresina, where Wittgenstein inflicted such heavy loss on us, Napoleon said to him : ' This disaster would probably not have happened if you had used your right to kill Wittgenstein on the battlefield of Polotsk, when the Russians were trying to tear him from your hands.' In spite of this reproach, whether deserved or not, Curély became a colonel soon afterwards, and general in 1814.

But to return to Polotsk. Repulsed on October 17, the enemy returned to the attack on the 18th, in such strength that, after suffering immense loss, Wittgenstein captured the entrenched camp. But Saint-Cyr, at the head of Legrand and Maison's divisions, drove him out with the bayonet. Seven times did the Russians return with fury to the charge, and seven times did the French and Croats repulse them, remaining in the end masters of all the positions. Marshal Saint-Cyr was wounded, but continued no less to direct the troops. His efforts were entirely successful, for the Russians left the field and retired into the forest, 50,000 men having been beaten by 15,000. Joy was general in the French camp ; but on the 19th we heard that General Steingel, at the head of 14,000 Russians, had crossed the Dwina by Disna, and was marching up the left bank to turn Polotsk and enclose Saint-Cyr's army between his force and that of Wittgenstein. And ere long his advanced guard appeared before Natcha, making for Ekimania, where were our

cuirassier division and the light cavalry regiments, from which the marshal had kept only a squadron of each at Polotsk.

In a moment we had mounted, and driven back the enemy, who would, however, have had the best of it in the end, as strong reinforcements were arriving, and we had no infantry, had not Marshal Saint-Cyr sent three regiments from those guarding Polotsk. Then Steingel, whom an effort would have brought to the bridges, stopped short, while Wittgenstein, on the other bank, remained motionless. It seemed as if the two Russian generals, after having formed a well-conceived plan for a combined attack, did not dare to carry it out, but were relying on each other to beat the French. Our position was nevertheless terribly critical; for those on the right bank were being forced back by Wittgenstein's army, threefold theirs in number, upon a town, built wholly of wood, and a large stream, and had no way of retreat open, save by the bridges which Steingel, on the left bank, was threatening. Then all the generals urged Saint-Cyr to evacuate Polotsk; but knowing that the Russians only awaited the first sign of a retrograde movement to fall on his weakened army and throw it into disorder, he preferred to wait till night. Taking advantage, therefore, of the unexpected inertness of the enemy, he waited immovably for sunset. The arrival of this was luckily hastened by a thick fog, which hid each of the three armies from the others; and the marshal seized this favourable moment for retreat.

The numerous artillery and some squadrons which had remained on the right bank had silently crossed the bridges, and the infantry was about to slip away, when, at the moment of their departure, Legrand's men, unwilling to leave their huts to the Russians, set them on fire. The other two divisions, thinking that it was an arranged signal, did the like, and in an instant the whole line was in a blaze. The conflagration proclaimed our retreat to the Russians, their batteries opened, and their shells set fire to the suburbs as well as to the town. Their columns advanced upon it headlong, but the French defended the ground foot by foot, being able to see, by the light of the fire, as in broad day. Polotsk was burned to the ground, both sides lost heavily, but our troops retreated in good order. All the wounded who could be removed were brought away; the rest, and many of the Russians, perished in the flames.

There appeared to be an utter want of agreement between the enemy's commanders, for during all this fighting Steingel remained quiet in his camp, and gave Wittgenstein no more

help than Wittgenstein had given him on the previous day.[1] Only when Saint-Cyr, after evacuating the place, had burnt the bridges over the Dwina, and put himself out of Wittgenstein's reach, did Steingel begin to make arrangements to attack us. But by that time the French troops were concentrated on the left bank, and Saint-Cyr led them against Steingel, beating him off with a loss of more than 2,000 men.

In this hard fighting, during four days and one night, the Russians had six generals and 10,000 men killed and wounded. The loss of the French and their allies did not amount to more than 5,000, the difference being no doubt due to the superiority of our fire, especially in the case of the artillery. But our advantage in the matter of loss was in some measure balanced by the fact that Marshal Saint-Cyr was wounded, and the army thus deprived of a chief in whom it had entire confidence. It became necessary to replace him, and Count von Wrede, on the strength of his rank as general-in-chief of the Bavarians, claimed to take command over the French generals of division. But as they refused to obey a foreigner, Saint-Cyr, though in much pain, agreed to keep the leadership of the two corps a little longer. He ordered a retreat towards Dula, so as to bring himself near to Smoliany, thus protecting the flank of the road from Orcha to Borisoff, by which the Emperor was returning from Moscow. So well was this retreat conducted that Wittgenstein and Steingel, who had repaired the bridges, and were following us up with 50,000 men, did not dare to attack us, though we had not more than 12,000. As for Wrede, his pride was wounded, and he could not bring himself to obey. He marched, therefore, as he pleased with the 1,000 Bavarians whom he had left, and a brigade of French cavalry, which he had brought away by telling General Corbineau, what was not the fact, that he had been ordered to do so. His presumption was soon punished; being attacked and beaten by a Russian division, he retired, without orders, to Wilna, whence he reached the Niemen. Corbineau's brigade refused to follow him, and rejoined the French army, to which you will see, when I come to speak of the passage of the Beresina, its return was of great service.

Meanwhile, by the Emperor's orders, Marshal Victor, at the head of the 9th army corps, 25,000 strong, half of which

[1] [If we may believe Tchichagoff's memoirs, the fatal disunion which too often prevailed among Napoleon's lieutenants existed no less among those of Alexander. It was to this, in great measure, that the fragments of the Grand Army owed their escape at the passage of the Beresina.]

belonged to the Confederation of the Rhine, was hurrying up from Smolensk to join Saint-Cyr, and throw Wittgenstein back across the Dwina. This plan would have taken effect promptly if Saint-Cyr had had the chief command, but Victor was the senior, and Saint-Cyr, not wishing to serve under him, declared, the day after their meeting, which took place on October 31 before Smoliany, that he could campaign no longer, and, handing over the command of the 2nd corps to General Legrand, departed for France. The troops regretted him, for, though they did not like him personally, they did justice to his courage and his wonderful military talent. All that Saint-Cyr needed to be a consummate commander was a smaller share of egotism and the knowledge how to attach men and officers to him by attending to their wants. But no man is faultless.

Hardly had Marshal Victor taken command of the united 2nd and 9th corps when fortune offered him the chance of winning a brilliant victory. Wittgenstein, ignorant of the junction which had taken place, and trusting to his own superior strength, attacked our outposts imprudently, leaving difficult defiles in his rear. It only wanted a simultaneous effort of the two corps to destroy him, for our troops were now as numerous as his; their spirit was excellent, and they were keen to fight. But Victor, no doubt distrusting himself on ground which he had not seen before, took advantage of the night to retire, reached Sienno, and cantoned the two corps in the neighbourhood. The Russians also went away, leaving only a few Cossacks to watch us. This state of things, which lasted for the first fortnight in November, was very favourable to our troops, for the district offered plenty of resources, and they lived in comfort.

The 23rd Chasseurs, posted at Zapole, was covering one flank of the united corps, when Marshal Victor, hearing that a large force of the enemy was at Vonisokoi-Ghorodie, ordered General Castex to reconnoitre this point with one of his regiments. It was the turn for mine to march. We started at nightfall, and reached Ghorodie without hindrance. The village stood in a bottom, on a large drained marsh. Everything was quiet, and the peasants whom I questioned through Lorenz had not seen a Russian soldier for a month. I therefore prepared to go back to Zapole; but our return was not as calm as our outward march had been. There was no fog, but the night was very dark, and I was afraid that the regiment was going astray among the numerous dykes in the marsh. I therefore took for guide one of the inhabitants of Ghorodie, who appeared less stupid than the others. My column had proceeded in good

order for half an hour, when I suddenly perceived bivouac fires upon the hills surrounding the marsh. I halted my men, and sent out two intelligent sergeants to reconnoitre, bidding them try and avoid being seen. They soon came back, saying that a strong body was blocking our way, while another was in position in our rear. I turned round, and when I saw thousands of fires between me and Ghorodie it seemed clear that I had inadvertently got into the middle of an army corps, which was preparing to bivouac on the spot. The fires kept increasing in number ; the plain and hills were soon covered with them, and presented the appearance of a camp of 50,000 men, in the midst of which was I with less than 700 troopers. The odds were great, but how were we to avoid the danger which threatened ? The only way was to gallop forward in silence along the main dyke upon which we were, to surprise the enemy by a sudden charge, and cut our way through, sword in hand. Once out of the light of the camp-fires, the darkness would save us from pursuit. Having decided on this course, I sent officers all along the column to let the troops know, being certain that all would approve my plan and follow me resolutely. I must admit that I was not without anxiety, for the enemy's infantry might stand to their arms at the first challenge of a sentry, and kill many of my people while my regiment was passing in front of it. In the middle of my anxiety, the peasant who was guiding us burst into shouts of laughter, and Lorenz did the same. In vain did I question the latter, he could not stop laughing ; and not knowing enough French to explain the unusual circumstances, he showed me his cloak, on which had just settled one of the will-o'-the-wisps which we had taken for bivouac fires. The phenomenon was produced by the marsh emanations, which a slight frost following on a day of hot autumn sunshine had condensed. In a little time the whole regiment was covered with these fires, as large as eggs, at which the soldiers were much diverted. Thus relieved from one of the greatest frights that I had ever had I returned to Zapolc.

CHAPTER LXXI.

A FEW days later a fresh duty fell to me, in the course of which we had to face not will-o'-the-wisps, but the carbines of Russian dragoons. One day when General Castex had gone to Sienno to meet Marshal Victor, and my regiment was at Zapole, I saw two peasants arrive, and recognised in one of them Captain Bourgoing, an aide-de-camp of Oudinot's. That marshal, who, after being wounded at Polotsk on August 18, had gone to Wilna, having heard that Saint-Cyr had been wounded in his turn on October 18 and left the army, had decided to resume the command of the 2nd corps. Knowing that his troops were in the neighbourhood of Sienno, he was making for that town, when, on reaching Rasna, he was warned by a Polish priest that a party of Russian dragoons and Cossacks was prowling about. He heard, however, at the same time that there were French cavalry at Zapole, and resolved to write to the commander asking for a strong escort. The letter was sent by the hand of M. de Bourgoing, who, for greater security, disguised himself as a peasant. It was just as well he did, for he had hardly gone a league when he fell in with a strong force of Russian cavalry, who, thinking he was an inhabitant of the country, took no notice of him. A few moments later M. de Bourgoing heard firing, and hastened on to Zapole. On hearing from him of the marshal's critical position, I trotted off with my whole regiment to bring him speedy succour. It was high time for us to do so, for, although the marshal had barricaded himself in a stone house and was defending himself valiantly with the help of his aide-de-camp and a dozen French soldiers on their way back to the army, his position was about to be forced by the Russian dragoons, when we appeared. At the sight of us they remounted and took to flight. My troopers pursued them, killed a score of them, and took some prisoners, with a loss of two wounded. Marshal Oudinot expressed his gratitude, and my regiment escorted him till he reached the French cantonments and was out of danger.

At the time of which I speak all the marshals of the Empire

seemed determined to recognise no rights of seniority among themselves, for none would serve under one of his colleagues, however serious the occasion might be. When, therefore, Oudinot had resumed the command of the 2nd corps, Victor, rather than fight Wittgenstein under his orders, marched off with his 25,000 men towards Kokanoff. Thus left alone, Marshal Oudinot marched his troops about for several days in different parts of the province, and finally established his head-quarters at Tchereia with his advanced guard at Lukulen.

It was during a little fight which Castex's brigade had in front of that town that my promotion to colonel at last reached me. If you consider that as major I had received a wound at Znaym in Moravia, two at Miranda de Corvo in Portugal, one at Jakobowo, had served four campaigns with that rank, and that I had been in command of a regiment ever since the French entered Russia, you will perhaps think that I had pretty well earned my new epaulettes. I was none the less grateful to the Emperor, especially when I learnt that I was still to have the 23rd Chasseurs, of whom I was very fond, and by whom I knew that I was both beloved and valued. In fact, there was great joy throughout the regiment, and the brave men whom I had so often led to battle came, men and officers alike, to express their satisfaction at keeping me as their commander. The kind General Castex, who had always treated me as a brother, himself announced my promotion at the head of the regiment. Lastly, the colonel of the 24th, although we were not very intimate, came at the head of all his officers to congratulate me.

Meanwhile the situation of the French army was getting worse every day. Field-Marshal Schwarzenberg, commander-in-chief of the Austrian corps which formed the right wing of the army, had by the basest treachery allowed Tchichagoff's troops to pass him; they had taken Minsk and were threatening our rear. The Emperor must have deeply regretted that he had entrusted the command of Lithuania to the Dutch general, Hogendorf, who, having seen nothing of war, did not know how to set about saving Minsk. The capture of that place was a serious matter; but the Emperor attached little importance to it, because he reckoned on passing the Beresina at Borisoff, where there was a bridge covered by a fortress in good condition and guarded by a Polish regiment. So great was Napoleon's confidence on this point that, in order to lighten the march of his army, he had had all his pontoons burned at Orcha. This was a great disaster, for they would have assured us a ready passage over the Beresina, a passage which we had to buy at the cost

of so much bloodshed. Secure as Napoleon felt with regard to this, on learning that Minsk was occupied by the Russians, he ordered Marshal Oudinot to come by forced marches to Borisoff; but we arrived too late, because General Bronikoffski, who was charged with the defence of the fort on the right bank, finding himself surrounded by large numbers of the enemy, thought to do a praiseworthy action by saving the garrison. Instead, therefore, of offering a stubborn resistance, which would have given Oudinot time to come to his relief, the Polish general abandoned the place, crossing with his whole garrison to the left bank and taking the road to Orcha, so as to rejoin Oudinot, which he did in front of Natcha. The marshal received him with displeasure, and ordered him to return with us towards Borisoff. Not only were the town, the bridge over the Beresina, and the fortress commanding it already in Tchichagoff's hands, but that general, who, after his success, was eager to fight the French troops, had started on November 23 to meet them with the greater part of his army, the advance-guard being commanded by General Lambert, the best of his lieutenants. The ground being level, Marshal Oudinot made the cuirassier division march at the head of his infantry, preceded by Castex's light cavalry brigade.

Three leagues from Borisoff the Russian advance-guard came in contact with our cuirassiers, who, having had very little fighting in the course of this campaign, had begged for the honour of being placed in the first line. At the sight of these five regiments, which were still strong and well mounted, the Russian cavalry stopped short. Recovering their courage, however, they advanced again. Then our cuirassiers with a furious charge overthrew them, killing or capturing a thousand men. Tchichagoff, who had been assured that Napoleon's army was by this time only a disorderly and unarmed crowd, was not prepared for such vigour, so he retreated in haste towards Borisoff. It usually happens that after executing a charge the big horses of the heavy cavalry, especially the cuirassiers, cannot go on galloping. It was, therefore, the 23rd and 24th Chasseurs who were ordered to pursue the enemy while the cuirassiers came on at a slackened pace in the second line.

Tchichagoff had not only committed the mistake of coming to meet Oudinot's corps, but he had also caused all the baggage wagons of his army, to the number of more than 1,500, to follow him. So great, therefore, was the disorder in the headlong retreat of the Russians towards Borisoff that Castex's two regiments often found their march hampered by the vehicles which the enemy had abandoned. This hindrance became still greater

when we entered the town, the streets of which were crowded with baggage and draught horses, among which were streaming the Russian soldiers, who had thrown away their arms, and were trying to get back to the Russian regiments. Still, we reached the middle of the town, but only after losing precious time, by which the enemy profited to get across the river.[1] The marshal's orders were to reach the bridge and try to cross it, together with the Russian fugitives; but in order to do this, it was necessary to know where the bridge was, and none of us was acquainted with the town. At length my troopers found a Jew, whom I questioned in German; but whether it was that the scamp did not understand that language, or pretended that he did not, we could get no information from him. I would have given a good deal to have had my Polish servant Lorenz with me, but the coward had remained behind when the fighting began. Still, we had to get out of the fix somehow; so we made several detachments explore the streets until at last they found the Beresina. That river was not yet sufficiently frozen for us to be able to cross it on the ice, so that it was necessary to pass over the bridge. But to take the bridge we required infantry, and ours was still three leagues off. Marshal Oudinot, who came up at this moment, ordered General Castex to supply its place by making three-quarters of his troopers dismount and attack the bridge formed into a little battalion armed with carbines. We hastened to obey, and, leaving our horses in the neighbouring streets guarded by a few men, made for the river, under the lead of General Castex, who chose to march to this perilous undertaking at the head of his brigade.

The recent discomfiture of the Russian advance-guard had carried alarm into Tchichagoff's army. Disorder prevailed on the bank which it occupied, where we could see masses of fugitives making off across the country. Thus, although it had at first seemed to me very hard work for dismounted troopers without bayonets to force a bridge and maintain themselves there, I began to hope for success when I saw that we were opposed by only a few skirmishers. I therefore ordered the section who should first reach the right bank to capture houses near the bridge, so that holding both ends of it we could defend it till our infantry came up, and thus secure the passage of the Beresina for the French army. But the guns of the fort began to thunder, and the bridge was swept by a storm of grape which threw our feeble battalion into disorder, and forced it for a

[1] [Tchichagoff's memoirs fully confirm all these details.]

moment to recoil. A band of Russian pioneers armed with torches took advantage of this moment to set the bridge on fire; but, as their presence caused the enemy's artillery to cease firing, we hurled ourselves on them, killing or throwing into the river the greater number of them. The chasseurs had put out the fire, which had hardly caught, when a battalion of grenadiers came up at the double, and forced us at the bayonet's point to abandon the bridge, which was presently covered with lighted torches, and became a huge furnace, until its blazing heat compelled both sides to draw off. Thenceforth the French had to renounce all hope of crossing the Beresina by that bridge, and their retreat was cut off. This terrible calamity decided our fate and aided vastly to shake down Napoleon's throne and change the face of Europe.

Oudinot saw that it was impossible to force the passage of the river in front of Borisoff, and decided that it would be dangerous to crowd that town with his own troops. He therefore gave orders to encamp between Lochnitza and Nemonitza. Castex's brigade alone remained at Borisoff, under strict orders not to communicate with the other corps, so that the fatal news of the burning of the bridge might be kept from them as long as possible. They did not learn it till forty-eight hours later.

By the custom of war, enemy's baggage belongs to the captors. General Castex therefore authorised the men of the 23rd and 24th to take possession of the plunder contained in the 1,500 vehicles of all kinds which the Russians had left behind when they fled across the bridge. The booty was immense—a hundred times more, indeed, than the brigade could carry. So I assembled my regiment, and pointed out that as they had a long retreat before them, during which it would probably be impossible for us to continue distributing rations of meat, as I had done throughout the campaign, they had better take steps chiefly to supply themselves with provisions. I added that they should also think of protecting themselves against the cold; and that as overladen horses do not last long, they must not break theirs down with all sorts of things of no use in war. To sum up, I said that I should hold an inspection, and that all that was not food, shoes, or clothing would be rejected without mercy. To avoid all discussion, General Castex had had stakes planted, to divide the captured carriages into two divisions, and each regiment had its own. As the town was surrounded on three sides by Oudinot's army, while the fourth side was covered by the Beresina and watched by pickets, our men could safely investigate the contents of the

Russian carts and carriages. So when the word was given the search began. It seemed that Tchichagoff's officers took good care of themselves, for never in the equipage of an army was seen such a profusion of hams, pies, smoked fish and meat, and wines of all kinds, not to mention ship's biscuit, rice, cheese, &c. Our soldiers also benefited by the furs and strong boots which they found in the wagons, the capture of which thus saved many a man's life. The drivers had not even had time to take away their horses, and as these were nearly all good, we selected the best to replace any with which our troopers found fault. The officers also took some to carry the provisions with which each had so amply furnished himself.

The brigade passed the whole of November 24 in Borisoff, and, as in spite of all precautions the news of the destruction of the bridge had spread in the bivouacs of the 2nd corps, Marshal Oudinot, wishing that all his troops might profit by the goods contained in the enemy's wagons, agreed to let detachments from all the regiments enter the town, making room for others as soon as they had loaded themselves. Notwithstanding that Oudinot's troops carried off great quantities of provisions and all kinds of plunder, there was plenty left to be taken on the following day by the swarms of disbanded troops on their way back from Moscow.

Meanwhile the chiefs and all officers capable of estimating the awkward position of the army were feeling keen anxiety. Before us we had the Beresina with Tchichagoff's troops lining the opposite banks, Wittgenstein had outflanked us, and Kutusoff was in our rear. Except for the remains of the guard and the corps of Oudinot and Victor, now reduced to a few thousands, the rest of that Grand Army which had lately been so splendid was composed of sick and of disarmed soldiers, from whom misery had taken all their old energy. Everything seemed to conspire against us, for even though Ney had been able, thanks to the lowered temperature, to escape the enemy a few days back by crossing the Dnieper on the ice, we had found the Beresina unfrozen in spite of the extreme cold, and we had no pontoons by which to cross it.

On the 25th the Emperor entered Borisoff, where he found Marshal Oudinot waiting with the 6,000 men who remained to him. Napoleon and the marshals and officers who accompanied him were surprised to see the good order maintained in the 2nd corps, the bearing of which formed a remarkable contrast to that of the miserable bands whom they were bringing back from Moscow. Our troops did not look so nice, indeed, as they

would in a garrison town, but each man had kept his weapons and was ready to make a brave use of them. The Emperor, struck by their martial air, called together all the colonels and bade them express to their regiments his satisfaction at their excellent conduct in all the sanguinary engagements fought in the province of Polotsk.

You will remember that when the Bavarian general, Von Wrede, left the 2nd corps he carried off with him Corbineau's brigade of cavalry, after deceiving the general by assuring him that he had orders to that effect. To this bit of deceit was due the salvation of the Emperor and the fragments of the Grand Army. As it turned out, Corbineau, dragged off against his will in the opposite direction to the corps to which he belonged, had followed General Wrede as far as Glubokoi. There, however, he declared that he would go no further unless the Bavarian general would show him his alleged orders to keep the brigade with him. As Wrede could not satisfy this demand, Corbineau left him and made for the head waters of the Beresina, then passing down the right bank he hoped to reach Borisoff, cross the river there, and taking the Orcha road go to meet Oudinot's corps, which he assumed to be in the neighbourhood of Bobra.

The Emperor has been blamed for that having several millions of Poles in his service he did not at the beginning of the campaign place some of them as interpreters with every general and every colonel; a prudent measure which would have avoided many errors. A proof of this was seen during the dangerous journey of several days which Corbineau's brigade was obliged to make through an unknown country, of which no Frenchman could speak the language. Very fortunately one of his three regiments was the 8th Polish Lancers, the officers of which got all the necessary information from the inhabitants; a service which was of immense advantage to Corbineau. For instance, when he had come within half a day's journey of Borisoff some peasants informed his Polish lancers that the town was occupied by Tchichagoff's army. Corbineau was giving up all hope of crossing the Beresina, when the same peasants advised him to retreat, and guided his column to a point opposite Studzianka, a little village about four leagues above Borisoff, in front of which there was a ford. The three cavalry regiments crossed it without loss, and the general, making across country, cleverly avoided any approach to Borisoff or to Wittgenstein's troops, who were posted at Rogatka, slipped between them and finally rejoined Marshal

Oudinot on the evening of the 23rd, close to Natcha. This bold march of Corbineau's was creditable to him and most fortunate for the army, for the Emperor, seeing that it was physically impossible to restore the bridge at Borisoff, decided after consultation with him to cross the Beresina at Studzianka. Seeing, however, that Tchichagoff, having heard of Corbineau's passage at that point, had posted a strong division with plenty of artillery opposite Studzianka, Napoleon deceived the enemy by an artifice which, though it is pretty old, seldom fails. He pretended to have no design on Studzianka, but to be intending to make use of two other fords situated below Borisoff, the less unfavourable of which is by the village of Ukoloda. To this end one of the battalions which still had its arms was marched towards that spot, followed by many thousands of stragglers, whom the enemy were to take for a strong infantry division. The rear of the column was brought up by many wagons, some guns, and the cuirassier division. On reaching Ukoloda these troops began to do whatever was necessary to give the impression that they were constructing a bridge. Tchichagoff got warning of these preparations, and, nothing doubting but that Napoleon's plan was to cross the river at this point and reach the neighbouring road to Minsk, not only hastened to send all the garrison of Borisoff by the right bank to the point opposite Ukoloda, but by an extraordinary piece of blundering, not having sufficient forces to guard the river both up and down at the same time, he also made all the troops which he had posted the day before above Borisoff, between Zembin and the Beresina, descend towards Ukoloda. Now, it is exactly opposite Zembin that the village of Veselovo, to which the hamlet of Studzianka belongs, is situated. Thus the enemy abandoned the point at which the Emperor wished to throw his bridge across, and hurried off uselessly to defend a ford six leagues below that of which we were going to make use.

Besides this blunder of massing his whole army below the town of Borisoff, Tchichagoff committed another which any sergeant would have avoided, and for which his Government never forgave him. Zembin is built on a broad marsh crossed by the road to Wilna. In the causeway which carries this road there are twenty-two wooden bridges, which the Russian general might have reduced to ashes in a moment, seeing that they are surrounded by a great many stacks of dry rushes. Had Tchichagoff taken this wise precaution, the French army must have been irrevocably lost. To cross the river would have done it no good, since it would have been stopped by the deep marsh

which surrounds Zembin. But, as I have said, the Russian general left these bridges intact and went down the Beresina with all his people, leaving only some fifty Cossacks in front of Veselovo.

While the Russians were deceived by Napoleon's demonstration into abandoning the real point of attack, Napoleon was giving his orders. Marshal Oudinot was to take his corps in the night to Studzianka to allow of the construction of two bridges there, and then to cross to the right bank and form between Zembin and the river. Victor was to start from Natcha, and, forming the rear-guard, to drive all stragglers in front of him, try to defend Borisoff for a few hours, and then make for Studzianka and cross the bridges. Such were the Emperor's orders, but events prevented them from being accurately carried out.

On the evening of the 25th Corbineau's division marched towards Studzianka, passing up the left bank of the Beresina. Castex's brigade and a few light battalions followed, and then the bulk of the 2nd corps. We were sorry to leave Borisoff, where we had passed two pleasant days. It might seem that we had a presentiment of the troubles in store for us.

At daybreak on the 26th we were at Studzianka. No preparations for defence were to be seen on the further bank, so that if the Emperor had kept the pontoons which he had burnt a few days before, the army might have crossed the Beresina on the spot. That river, which has been imaginatively described as of enormous width, is at most as wide as the Rue Royale at Paris, opposite the Ministry of Marine. As for its depth, it will be enough to say that the three cavalry regiments of Corbineau's brigade had forded it without any mishap three days before, and did so again. Their horses either never lost the bottom or had at most to swim two or three fathoms. At that moment the passage could be made by cavalry wagons or artillery, with slight inconvenience, the chief being that troopers and drivers had the water up to their knees, which was quite bearable, as the cold was, unfortunately, not enough to freeze the river, and there was little ice even floating down; a few degrees lower would have been all the better for us. The second inconvenience was also a result of the absence of severe cold; for the swampy meadow on the further bank was so muddy that saddle-horses could only cross it with difficulty, while wagons went in up to the axletrees.

Esprit de corps is no doubt highly praiseworthy, but one should be able to hold it in check or forget it in difficult circumstances. This was more than the artillery and engineer

commanders could do at the Beresina. Each of these corps claimed the sole right to build the bridges, with the result that they got in each other's way, and no progress had been made when the Emperor arrived about noon on the 26th. He settled the difficulty by ordering that each should build one bridge. Beams and laths were at once torn from the hovels in the village, and sappers and gunners fell to work. Then those brave men gave a proof of devotion, for which credit enough has not been given them. They leapt into the cold water of the Beresina and worked there for six or seven hours, though there was not a drop of spirits to give them, and they had no bed to look forward to for the following night, but a field covered with snow. They nearly all died when the great frost came.

While the construction of the bridges was going on, and my regiment with all the 2nd corps was on the left bank, awaiting the order to cross the river, the Emperor was striding about, accompanied by Murat, going from one regiment to another, and talking to men as well as officers. Murat, the brave and dashing soldier, who had performed such fine feats of arms when the French were marching victoriously on Moscow, had been, as it were, under an eclipse ever since they had left that town, and during this time had taken no part in any fighting. Men saw him following the Emperor about in silence, as though a stranger to all that was going on. When, however, he came in sight of the Beresina, and the only hope which had maintained their discipline, and now formed the last hope of safety, he seemed to awake from his torpor. Being very fond of the cavalry, and seeing that, of all the squadrons which had crossed the Niemen, those of Oudinot's corps alone remained, he diverted the Emperor's steps towards them. Napoleon was in ecstasies at the fine condition of the troops in general, and of my regiment in particular, for it was indeed stronger than many brigades. In fact, I still had more than 500 men mounted, while the other colonels of the army corps had, none of them, more than 200. I received, therefore, most flattering congratulations from the Emperor, in which my officers and men shared largely. It was just then that I had the joy of seeing John Dupont, my brother's servant, whose devotion, courage, and fidelity were above all proof. Left alone, after his master had been taken prisoner early in the campaign, John followed the 16th Chasseurs to Moscow, and accompanied the retreat, always tending and feeding my brother's three horses. Nor would he sell one of them, in spite of the most tempting offers. The good lad came to rejoin me after five months of fatigue and misery, bringing all my brother's

property; but, as he showed it to me, he said, with tears in his eyes, that, having worn out his boots and finding himself reduced to walking barefoot on the ice, he had made free to take a pair of his master's boots. I kept this good man in my service, and found him very useful a little later, when I was again wounded in the worst days of the retreat.

But to return to the passage of the Beresina. Not only did all our horses cross the river easily, but the canteen-men got over with their light carts, which made me think that it might be possible to unharness some of the numerous wagons which followed the army, and fixing them in the river one behind another to form in this way footways for the infantry. This would greatly facilitate the flow of the masses of isolated men who would next day be passing about the entrance of the bridges. This idea seemed to me so happy that, wet to the waist as I was, I recrossed the ford to communicate it to the generals of the Emperor's staff. They thought my plan a good one, but no one stirred to speak of it to the Emperor. Finally, General Lauriston said to me: 'I entrust to you the task of making this footbridge, the utility of which you have so well explained.' To this I replied that, as I had at my disposal neither sappers, nor infantrymen, nor tools, nor stakes, nor ropes, and as further I was unable to leave my regiment, which was on the right bank, and might be attacked at any moment, I confined myself to offering what I thought a good piece of advice, and would return to my post. With that I went into the water again and rejoined the 23rd. Meanwhile the engineers and artillery had at length finished the two trestle bridges, and Oudinot's infantry and artillery were sent across. On reaching the right bank they went and bivouacked in a great wood half a league off, beyond Zavniski, where the cavalry were ordered to join them. Thus we could watch Stakovo and Dominki, where the main road from Minsk comes in. By this Tchichagoff had taken all his troops towards the lower Beresina, and by this he must perforce come back when he heard that we had crossed the river near Zembin.

On the evening of the 27th the Emperor with his guard crossed the river and established himself at Zavniski. The enemy had not yet shown. Much has been said of the disasters which took place at the Beresina; but what has never yet been said is, that the greater part of them might have been saved if the head-quarters staff had understood its duties better, and taken advantage of the night of the 27th to get all the baggage and, still more, the thousands of stragglers who next day

blocked the way across the bridges. After settling my regiment in its bivouac at Zavniski, I noticed the absence of a pack-horse which carried our regimental cash-box and account-books, and therefore could not be allowed to run the risks of the ford. I thought, therefore, that his driver and the troopers who escorted him had waited till the bridges were finished. This they had been for some hours, and yet the men did not appear. Then, being anxious about them as well as about the important property which was entrusted to them, I thought I would go myself and assist them to cross, for I supposed that there was a block on the bridges. I galloped off, therefore, and what was my surprise to find them completely deserted. At that moment no one was crossing, while a hundred paces away I could see by the bright moonlight more than 50,000 stragglers and soldiers separated from their regiments—*rôtisseurs* as they were called. These men, sitting calmly in front of enormous fires, were grilling horseflesh without a notion that they had in front of them a river, the passage of which would cost many of them their lives on the next day, while they could at the present time cross it without hindrance in a few minutes, and finish preparing their supper on the other bank. Not one officer of the imperial household, not one aide-de-camp, not a single marshal, was there to warn those poor wretches, and, if necessary, to drive them to the bridges. It was in this disorderly camp that I saw for the first time soldiers returning from Moscow; it was a heartbreaking sight. All ranks were confounded; there were no arms, no military bearings; soldiers, officers, even generals were clad in rags, and for boots had nothing but strips of leather or cloth hardly fastened together with string—a huge rabble, in which thousands of men of different nations were jumbled, shouting in every language of the continent of Europe, and unable to understand each other. Yet if in Oudinot's corps or in the guard some of the battalions had been selected which still kept their discipline, they might easily have driven the mass across the bridges. I myself, when returning to Zavniski, having only a few orderlies with me, succeeded, partly by persuasion, partly by force, in making 2,000 or 3,000 of the poor wretches cross to the right bank; but other duties called me, and I had to rejoin my regiment. As I passed by the head-quarters staff and Oudinot's staff I called attention to the empty state of the bridges, and the ease with which the unarmed men could be brought across at a moment when the enemy was not trying to do anything. But it was in vain; I only received evasive answers, and

each man left the task of directing the operation to his colleagues.[1]

On returning to the bivouac of my regiment I was agreeably surprised to find the corporal and eight troopers who had had charge of our herd during the campaign. These good fellows were in despair because the mob of *rôtisseurs* had thrown themselves on our cattle, cut them up and eaten them under their very eyes, without their being able to hinder it. The regiment consoled itself for the loss, for each trooper had taken twenty-five days' provisions at Borisoff. The zeal of my adjutant having urged him to return to the other side of the bridges to try and discover the guardians of our account-books, that brave soldier went astray in the crowd, could not recross the river, and was made prisoner in the tumult of the following day. It was two years before I saw him again.

[1] [In his account of the campaign of Russia, published at Stuttgart in 1843, Faber du Faur notices this empty state of the bridges on the night of November 27, and even on that of the 28th.]

CHAPTER LXXII.

We have now reached the most terrible moment in the fatal Russian campaign, the passage of the Beresina, which took place chiefly on November 28. When this ill-omened day dawned the position of the two armies was as follows. On the left bank Marshal Victor's corps, having evacuated Borisoff during the night, had reached Studzianka with the 9th corps, driving a crowd of stragglers before it. The marshal had left to act as rear-guard General Partouneaux's infantry division, which, having been ordered not to evacuate the town till two hours later, ought to have sent out several small detachments to follow the army corps, and so being connected with the main body by a line of scouts, as it were, to stake out the direction. Besides this the general ought to have sent an aide-de-camp to Studzianka to reconnoitre the roads and come back to meet the division. But Partouneaux neglected all these precautions, and contented himself with marching at the appointed hour. He came to where two roads forked, and he knew neither of them; but as he could not have been ignorant, coming from Borisoff, that the Beresina was on his left, he might have concluded that in order to reach Studzianka, which was on the river, it was the left-hand road that he ought to take. He did just the contrary, and, mechanically following some light infantry who were in advance, he got on to the right-hand road and walked straight into the middle of Wittgenstein's army. The division was quickly surrounded and compelled to lay down its arms.[1] Meanwhile, a major who was in command of the rear-guard, having had the good sense to take the road to the left, simply because it would bring him to the river, rejoined Marshal Victor at Studzianka. Great was the marshal's surprise when he saw this one battalion come up instead of Partouneaux's division. But his surprise changed to bewilderment when he was attacked by Wittgenstein's Russians,

[1] [General Partouneaux made an heroic resistance, and before his division surrendered it was reduced to a few hundred combatants (see Thiers' *History of the Consulate and Empire*).]

whom he supposed Partouneaux to be holding in check. Then Victor could no longer doubt that that general and all his regiments were taken.

But fresh disasters awaited him, for Marshal Kutusoff, who had been following Partouneaux all the way from Borisoff with a strong force, on hearing of his surrender quickened his march and came on to join Wittgenstein and crush Victor. The latter, with his corps reduced to 10,000 men, offered a vigorous resistance. His troops, even the Germans, fought with an heroic courage all the more striking because, while attacked by two armies at once and having the Beresina in their rear, their movements were further hampered by a number of wagons driven without any order by a crowd of individuals striving in wild tumult to reach the river. Even so, Victor held Wittgenstein and Kutusoff the whole day.

During this confusion and this fighting at Studzianka, the enemy, who aimed at getting possession of both ends of the bridges, were on the right bank, attacking Oudinot's corps, posted in front of Zavniski. Tchichagoff's 30,000 men, issuing from Stakovo, advanced with loud shouts against the 2nd corps, which could not number more than 8,000. But as our soldiers had not come into contact with those who were returning from Moscow, and had no idea of the disorder prevailing among those poor wretches, the tone of Oudinot's corps had remained excellent, and Tchichagoff was vigorously repulsed under the Emperor's eyes. He himself arrived at the moment with 3,000 infantry and 1,000 cavalry of the guard, old and young. The Russians renewed their attack and broke the Polish Legion of the Vistula. Oudinot was severely wounded, and Napoleon sent Ney to take his place. General Coudras, a good infantry officer, was killed, and the valiant General Legrand dangerously wounded. This action took place in a wood of huge firs. The enemy's artillery was thus prevented from getting a good sight of our troops, so that its volleys did not touch us; but as the shot flew over our heads they broke off branches thicker than a man's body, which killed and wounded many of our people and many horses in their fall. As the trees stood wide apart the cavalry could move among them, though with difficulty; in spite of which Ney, on seeing a strong Russian column advancing, launched what was left of our cuirassiers against them. Though executed under these unwonted conditions, that charge was one of the most brilliant I ever saw. Colonel Dubois, at the head of the 7th Cuirassiers, cut the enemy's column in two, taking 2,000 prisoners. Thus thrown into confusion, the Russians

were pursued by the light cavalry, and driven back with immense loss even to Stakovo.[1]

As I was re-forming my regiment after this engagement, I saw my friend M. Alfred de Noailles coming towards me. He was coming back from carrying an order for Prince Berthier, to whom he was aide-de-camp; but, instead of returning to his chief, he said as he left me that he would go as far as the first houses of Stakovo to see what the enemy were doing. His curiosity was fatal to him, for, as he drew near the village, he was surrounded by a group of Cossacks, who threw him from his horse and dragged him along by the collar, striking him as they went. I sent at once a squadron to his assistance, but my effort was fruitless, for a brisk fire from the houses prevented the troopers from entering the village, and from that day nothing was ever heard of M. de Noailles. No doubt his richly-furred uniform with its gold lace had excited the cupidity of the barbarians, and they had butchered him. His family, hearing that I was the last Frenchman to whom he had spoken, asked me for information about his disappearance, but I could give them no more than I have told here. He was an excellent officer and a good comrade.

But this digression has made me forget Tchichagoff, who, having been beaten by Ney, did not venture to attack us again all that day.

Having thus explained briefly the position of the armies on the two banks of the Beresina, I must say a few words as to what was taking place upon the river while the fighting was going on. The masses of unattached men—who had had two nights and days to cross the bridges, and who, in their apathy, had not taken advantage of them because no one compelled them to do so—wanted to cross all at once as soon as Wittgenstein's cannon-balls began to drop among them. The vast multitude of men, horses, and wagons got completely clubbed at the entrance of the bridges, blocking them without being able to reach them. Many were pushed by the crowd into the Beresina, and of these nearly all were drowned. As a crowning disaster, one of the bridges broke under the weight of the guns and ammunition wagons. All then made for the other bridge,

[1] [Tchichagoff, in his memoirs, has done justice to the vigour of our cavalry in this affair. Both he and Count Rochechouart confirm every point of the details given as to these events—the capture and loss of Borisoff by the Russians, their ill-timed movement down the Beresina, the fighting at Zavniski, the fatal destruction of the bridges, and the retreat of our troops across the frozen marshes of Zembin.]

where the confusion was already so great that the strongest could not withstand the crush, and a great number were suffocated. Seeing the impossibility of crossing the encumbered bridges, many of the wagon drivers urged their horses into the stream. But this method of crossing, which would have been very useful if it had been carried out in an orderly way two days before, was fatal to almost all who attempted it, because, pushing wildly forward, they hustled and overturned each other. Still, some reached the opposite bank, but as nothing had been done to prepare a landing by sloping away the banks—as the staff ought to have done—few vehicles succeeded in getting up, and many people perished there also.

During the night of the 28th, these horrors were increased by the Russian guns playing upon the wretches who were struggling to cross the river. At nine in the evening the cup of misery was overflowing, when Marshal Victor began his retreat, and his divisions came up to the bridge in good order, but could only reach it by forcibly pushing aside all who obstructed their passage. But let us draw a veil over these horrible scenes. At daybreak on the 29th all the vehicles remaining on the left bank were burnt; and when General Eblé saw the Russians approaching the bridge, he had that also set on fire. Some thousands of poor fellows who remained near Studzianka fell into Wittgenstein's hands. Thus ended the most terrible episode of the Russian campaign, an event which would have been far less disastrous if anyone had known how to make use of the time which the Russians allowed us after reaching the Beresina, and had chosen to do so. In that passage the army lost from 20,000 to 25,000 men.

This great obstacle passed, there still remained an immense body of unattached men who had escaped the frightful disaster. These were cleared away towards Zembin. The Emperor and his guard followed, next came the fragments of some regiments, and lastly the 2nd corps, of which Castex's brigade brought up the extreme rear. I have already said that the road to Zembin crosses a wide marsh over a great number of bridges, which Tchichagoff, when he occupied that position some days before, had omitted to burn. We did not commit a like error; for, after the army had passed, my regiment and the 24th set fire to them easily by means of the dry reeds which were stacked in the neighbourhood. When he gave orders to burn these bridges the Emperor had hoped to be freed for some time from pursuit by the Russians, but it was written that all the luck was to be against us. Thus the frost, which at this season of the year

should have turned the waters of the Beresina into an easy road, when we had to cross them left them almost as fluid as usual; but hardly were we over when the cold became severe, and froze them till they were solid enough to bear the weight of guns. The same took place with regard to the marshes of Zembin, so that burning the bridges was no use to us.[1] The three Russian armies which we had left behind us could betake themselves to the pursuit without any obstacle; luckily, however, they did so with little vigour. Moreover, Marshal Ney, who commanded the French rear-guard, had got together all who were fit to fight, and made frequent counter-attacks on the enemy when they ventured to approach too near.

Since Marshal Oudinot and General Legrand had been wounded, General Maison had been in command of the 2nd corps, which in spite of its heavy losses was the most numerous in the whole army, so that the task of beating off the Russians usually fell to it. We kept them at a distance during November 30 and December 1; but on the 2nd they pressed us so close with powerful forces that some serious fighting took place, in which I received a wound that was all the more dangerous from the fact that there were that day twenty-five degrees of frost.[2] I ought, perhaps, to say no more than that I received a lance wound, without entering into any details, for they are so shocking that I still shudder when I think of them; but I have promised to tell you the whole story of my life, so you shall hear what happened at the action of Pleshtchenitsi. In order to put you in a position to understand my story, I must tell you, to begin with, that a Dutch banker named Van Berghem, of whom I had been an intimate friend at the college of Sorèze, had at the beginning of the campaign sent me his only son, who, having become a Frenchman by the inclusion of his country in the Empire, had, though hardly sixteen years old,[3] enlisted in the 23rd. This young man had many good qualities and much intelligence. I took him for my secretary, and he always marched fifteen paces behind me with my orderlies. On the day of which I speak he was in his place, when, as we were crossing a wide plain, the 2nd corps saw hastening towards it a large body of Russian cavalry, which in

[1] [Tchichagoff excuses his own negligence by this fact.]

[2] [Presumably Centigrade; that is, 13 degs. below zero Fahrenheit.]

[3] [General Marbot's memory must surely have played him false here. He was himself but just over thirty, and it seems hardly credible that one of his school-friends can have had a son of sixteen.]

a moment overlapped it and attacked it on all sides. General Maison arranged so well that our infantry squares beat off all the charges of the Emperor's regular cavalry. As, however, they brought into action a host of Cossacks, who came insolently up, spearing the French officers in front of their troops, Marshal Ney ordered General Maison to drive them away by sending at them all that was left of the cuirassier division, as well as Corbineau's and Castex's brigades. My regiment, which was still strong, found itself in front of a 'pulk' of Cossacks from the Black Sea, wearing tall astrakhan caps, and much better dressed and mounted than Cossacks usually are. We charged them, but as Cossacks never fight in line they wheeled about and galloped away. Being, however, strangers to the locality, they went in the direction of an obstacle which is very uncommon in these wide plains, and were brought to a dead stop by a deep and broad ravine, which the perfect evenness of the ground made it impossible to see from a distance. Finding it out of the question to cross with their horses, and forced to face my regiment, which was on the point of catching them, the Cossacks turned, and closing up, met us bravely with their lances. The ground was covered with ice and very slippery, so that our tired horses could not gallop without tumbling. There was, therefore, no shock, and my line reached the motionless mass of the enemy at a trot only. Our swords touched the lances, but, as these were thirteen feet or fourteen feet long, it was impossible for us to touch our adversaries, who on their side dared not back for fear of falling over the precipice, nor advance to meet our swords. We therefore watched each other, until the following scene took place in less time than it takes to tell it. In haste to get done with the enemy I called out to my men that they must catch hold of the lances with their left hand, turn them aside, and push into the middle of the crowd, where our short weapons would give us a great advantage over their long poles. In order to be better obeyed, I thought I would set the example, and, putting some lances aside, I actually succeeded in getting within the front ranks of the enemy. My adjutants and orderlies followed me, and all the regiment presently doing the same, a general scuffle ensued. But at that moment an old white-bearded Cossack, who, being in the hinder ranks, was separated from me by other combatants, bent forward, and, pointing his lance adroitly between his comrades' horses, struck me with his sharp steel, which passed clean through below the knee-pan of my right leg. Feeling myself wounded, I was pressing forward to revenge myself on the man

for the sharp pain which I experienced when I saw before me two youths of eighteen or twenty years, in a rich costume ; they were the sons of the chief of the 'pulk.' An elderly man accompanied them as mentor, having no sword in his hand, nor did the younger of the two lads use his ; but the elder charged bravely, and attacked me furiously. He seemed so undeveloped and so weak that I merely disarmed him, and taking him by the arm, passed him behind me, and told Van Berghem to look after him. The next moment, however, I felt a hard object laid against my left cheek, a double report rang in my ears, and a bullet went through the collar of my cloak. Turning sharply, I saw the young Cossack officer with a brace of double-barrelled pistols in his hands. He had just fired treacherously on me from behind, and he now blew poor Van Berghem's brains out. Beside myself with rage, I dashed on the madman, who was taking aim at me with his second pistol. But as he met my eye he seemed fascinated, and cried out in good French, 'Oh God ! I see death in your eyes ! I see death in your eyes !' 'Ay, scoundrel, and you see right !' And he dropped.

Blood calls for blood. The sight of young Van Berghem stretched at my feet, and my own action, the excitement of battle, and perhaps also the frightful pain of my wound, all combined to throw me into a state of feverish agitation. I made towards the younger of the Cossack officers, caught him by the throat, and was in the act of raising my sword, when the old governor, seeking to protect his ward, bent forward over my horse's neck in such a way as to prevent me from using my arm, and cried in a tone of entreaty, 'For your mother's sake pardon this one, who has done nothing !' On hearing him invoke that revered name, my mind, overwrought by the surroundings, was struck with hallucination : I thought I saw a well-known white hand laid upon the young man's breast, which I was on the point of piercing, and I seemed to hear my mother's voice saying 'Pardon ! pardon !' My sword point dropped, and I had the youth and his governor taken to the rear.

So great was my emotion after this incident that I could not have given any word of command if the fight had lasted much longer ; but it was soon at an end. A great many Cossacks had been killed, and the rest, leaving their horses, had slid down into the ravine, where most of them perished in the snow-drifts which the wind had heaped up there. On other sides, too, the enemy were beaten off.

During the evening I questioned my prisoner and his attendant, and learnt that the two youths were the sons of a

powerful chief who had lost his leg at Austerlitz, and in consequence vowed so fierce enmity to the French that, as he could fight them no longer himself, he had sent his two sons to the war. I could see that the cold and his grief would soon make an end of the junior, so I took pity on him and his old mentor, and set them at liberty. As the old man took leave of me, he said: 'When she thinks of her elder son, these lads' mother will curse you; but when she sees the younger, she will bless you and your mother, for whose sake you spared her only remaining child.'

The vigorous repulse with which the Russian troops had met in the recent action damped their ardour, so that we saw nothing more of them for two days, and our retreat to Malodeczno was secured. But if the enemy left us a moment's peace, the frost waged bitter war with us, for the thermometer fell to 27 degrees of cold. Men and horses were dropping at every step—many never to rise again. Still I remained with the fragments of my regiment, bivouacking in their midst every night in the snow. Where, indeed, should I have been any better off? My officers and men, who looked upon their colonel as a living flag, made it a point of honour to save me, and took all the care of me that our terrible situation allowed. The wound in my knee prevented me from riding astride, so that I had to put my leg on the horse's withers and sit quite still, which made me very cold, my pain being intolerable; but what could I do?

The way was strewn with dead and dying; our march was slow and silent. The remains of the infantry of the guard formed a small square, within which went the Emperor's carriage. He had Murat beside him. On December 5, after issuing his twenty-ninth bulletin, which threw France into a state of dismay, Napoleon left the army at Smorgony, and set out for Paris. At Ochmiany he was nearly carried off by Cossacks. His departure produced a great effect on the troops: some blamed him for deserting them; others approved the course as the sole means of saving France from civil war and an invasion by our so-called allies, most of whom were only awaiting a favourable moment to declare against us. They would not dare to stir when they heard that Napoleon had re-entered his realm, and was organising a new army. This was the view which I shared, and events showed the justice of it.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

The Emperor, at his departure, entrusted the command of his shattered army to Murat, who showed himself unequal to the task—one as difficult, it may be admitted, as can be imagined. Everyone's faculties of mind and body were paralysed by the cold, and disorganisation prevailed throughout. Victor refused to relieve the 2nd corps, which had been acting as rear-guard from the Beresina, and Ney had much trouble in making him do so. Every morning we left thousands of dead in our bivouacs. Then I congratulated myself on having in September made my troopers set themselves up with sheepskin coats, a precaution to which many of them owed their lives. So with the victuals with which we had supplied ourselves at Borisoff, for without these we should have had to fight for dead horses with the famished multitude. On this point I may say that M. de Ségur exaggerates when he says that the poor wretches were driven by the pangs of hunger to eat human flesh.[1] The road was so lined with dead horses that no one needed to think of cannibalism. Further, it would be a great mistake to suppose that provisions were altogether lacking in the district. They only ran short in the places actually on the road, since the neighbourhood of these had been drained when the army was on its way to Moscow; but it had swept by like a torrent without spreading laterally, and the harvest had since been gathered, so that the country had in some measure recovered, and, by going a league or two to one side, a fair amount could be found. It is true that only detachments still in good order could make these expeditions without being picked up by the troops of Cossacks who prowled around us. I made arrangements, therefore, with several colonels to organise armed forages. These returned always not only with bread and some head of cattle, but bringing sledges laden with salt meat, flour, and oats, obtained in the villages which the peasants had not deserted; showing that if the Duke of Bassano and General Hogendorf, who had been entrusted with the management of Lithuania, had done their duty while they

[1] ['Some wretches flung themselves into the blazing heaps; their famished comrades looked on unterrified; there were even some who dragged out the disfigured and roasted bodies, and it is too true that they dared to fill their mouths with this revolting food' (De Ségur). Sir Robert Wilson (*Private Journal*) states that he *saw* 'a group of wounded men lying over the body of a comrade which they had roasted, and the flesh of which they had begun to eat.' This was before the Beresina.]

were at Wilna, they might with ease have established large stores. But they attended only to provisioning the town, and took no thought for the troops.

On December 26, the cold got far more intense, and that day was even more fatal than the preceding, especially for the troops who had not become gradually acclimatised. Among these was Gratien's division, consisting of conscripts to the number of 12,000, which had left Wilna on the 4th and come to meet us. The abrupt change from hot barracks to a bivouac with 29½ degrees of frost caused the death of nearly all these poor fellows within forty-eight hours. Still more terrible was the effect produced on 200 Neapolitan troopers of Murat's guard. They also had stayed a long time at Wilna when they came to meet us, but the first night which they passed on the snow killed them all. Those who were left of the Germans, Italians, Spaniards, and other foreigners whom he had brought into Russia saved their lives by a means repugnant to the French; they deserted, took refuge in the villages near the road, and waited till the enemy came up. This often did not occur for several days, for, strange as it may seem, the Russian soldiers, accustomed as they are to pass the winter in houses where draughts are always excluded and stoves are always lighted, are far more sensitive to cold than those of any other country, and the heavy losses which the enemy incurred from this cause explained the slackness of the pursuit. We did not understand why Kutusoff and his generals merely followed us with a weak advance-guard, instead of hurling themselves on our flanks, overlapping us, and thus cutting off our retreat. But this manœuvre, which would have completed our ruin, was impossible for them, seeing that the greater number of their soldiers, no less than of ours, died on the roads and in the bivouacs. So intense was the cold that we could see a kind of vapour rising from men's ears and eyes. Condensing on contact with the air, this vapour fell back on our persons with a rattle such as grains of millet might have made. We had often to halt, and clear away from the horses' bits the icicles formed by their frozen breath.

Thousands of Cossacks, meanwhile, attracted by the hope of plunder, endured the inclemency of the weather, and kept alongside of our columns, having even the audacity to attack them at the points where they saw the baggage. A few shots, however, were enough to drive them away. Finally, in order to give us trouble without any danger to themselves—since we had been obliged for want of teams to leave all our artillery behind—the Cossacks placed light guns on sledges, and with

these fired at our men until they saw a detachment coming in their direction, when they made off with all speed. These partial attacks, which did us, indeed, little harm, became very disagreeable by continued repetition. Many of our sick and wounded were taken and plundered by these marauders, some of whom acquired immense booty. Even from the ranks of our allies, the desire of acquiring wealth raised up new enemies for us—I refer to the Poles. Marshal Saxe, the son of one of their own kings, said rightly that the Poles are the greatest plunderers in the world, and would not respect even their fathers' goods. You may judge whether those who were in our service respected their allies' goods. On the march and in the bivouac they stole all that they could see, but as people began to distrust them, and petty larceny became difficult, they decided to go to work on a large scale. To this end they organised themselves into bands, threw away their helmets, and put on peasants' caps; and, slipping out of the bivouacs after dark, they assembled at an appointed place, and came back to the camp shouting the Cossacks' war-cry of 'Hourra!' thus terrifying the weaker men, many of whom fled, leaving their effects behind. Then the pretended Cossacks, after pillaging all round, went off, and returned before daylight to their places in the French column, where they resumed the title of Poles, with liberty to become Cossacks again the next night. Attention having been called to this atrocious brigandage, several generals and colonels resolved to punish it. General Maison had such a good look-out kept in the bivouacs of the 2nd corps, that one fine night our outposts surprised some fifty Poles just as they were making up to play their part of sham Cossacks, and were on the point of giving their 'Hourra!' as pillagers. Seeing themselves surrounded on all sides, the brigands had the impudence to say that they had meant to play a practical joke, but, as it was neither the place nor the time for joking, General Maison had them all shot then and there. It was some time before we saw any more robbers of that sort, but they reappeared later on.

On December 9, we reached Wilna, where there were still some stores, but the Duke of Bassano and General Hogendorf had retired to the Niemen, and there was no one to give orders. There, as at Smolensk, the commissaries required, before giving out provisions and clothing, that regular receipts should be handed to them, a thing which, in the disorganised state of all the regiments, was impossible to do, and thus precious time was lost. General Maison had several store-houses broken open,

and his troops got some food and clothing, but the rest was taken the next day by the Russians. Soldiers from the other corps went about the town in the hope of being taken in by the inhabitants, but the people who, six months before, had been longing for the French closed their houses as soon as they saw them in trouble. The Jews alone received those who could pay for this fleeting hospitality. Thus repulsed alike from the stores and from private houses, the great majority of the famished men made their way to the hospitals, which were soon crammed to overflowing, although there was not food enough there for all the poor people; but at least they were sheltered from the cold. Yet this precarious advantage decided more than 20,000 sick and wounded, among them 200 officers and eight generals, to go no further; they were utterly exhausted in mind and body. Lieutenant Hernoux, one of the stoutest and bravest officers in my regiment, was so distracted by what he had seen in the last few days that he laid himself down on the snow, and, no persuasions being able to make him rise, died there. Many soldiers of all ranks blew out their brains to put an end to their misery.

In the night of December 9, with 30 degrees of frost, some Cossacks came and fired shots at the gates of Wilna. Many people thought that it was Kutusoff's whole army, and in their terror left the town precipitately. I regret to have to say that King Murat was among the number. He departed without leaving any orders, but Marshal Ney remained and organised the retreat as best he could. We evacuated Wilna on the morning of the 10th, leaving there a great number of men, a park of artillery, and a portion of the treasure. Scarcely were we out of Wilna when the infamous Jews threw themselves on the French, whom they had taken into their houses to get out of them what little money they had, stripped them of their clothing, and pitched them naked out of window. Some officers of the Russian advance-guard, who were entering at the moment, were so angry at this atrocity that they had many of the Jews killed. In the midst of this tumult Marshal Ney had taken all whom he could set in motion along the road to Kovno, but he had hardly gone a league when he came to the heights of Ponari. This hill, which in ordinary circumstances the column would have crossed without noticing it, became a serious obstacle, since the ice had made the road so slippery that the horses were unable to drag the wagons up it. What remained of the treasure was therefore on the point of falling into the hands of the Cossacks, when Marshal Ney gave orders to have the chests opened and to let the men help themselves. This

prudent step, the motive of which M. de Ségur probably did not know, led him to say that the troops plundered the imperial treasure. In the *Spectateur Militaire* of the period I have also noted the following expression used by M. de Ségur: 'After the Emperor's departure, most of the colonels of the army, who had up till then gone on marching admirably with four or five officers or soldiers around their eagle, no longer took any orders save from themselves. There were men who went 200 leagues without turning their heads.' I may add that Marshal Ney, having seen the colonel and the major of a regiment which contained only sixty men fall in one fight, perceived that losses of this kind would stand in the way of reorganising the army, and gave orders that no more field-officers should be retained in presence of the enemy than were in proportion to the number of the troops.

Some days before our arrival at Wilna, many horses of my regiment having died from the intense cold, while it was impossible to mount those that remained, all my troopers marched on foot. I should have been very glad to be able to do the like, but as my wound did not allow of this I got a sledge and harnessed one of my horses to it. This gave me the idea that I might by the same means save my sick, who now were numerous, and as in Russia a sledge can be found in the poorest house, I soon had a hundred, each of which, drawn by a troop horse, brought away two men. General Castex thought this manner of travelling so convenient that he authorised me to put all the other troopers in sledges. Major Monginot, who had become colonel of the 24th Chasseurs since M. A—— had been promoted to general, received the same permission, and all that remained of our brigade harnessed its horses and formed a caravan which marched in perfect order. You may think that by travelling thus we destroyed our power for defence, but you must know that on the ice we were much stronger with the sledges—which could go anywhere, and in which the horses had the support of shafts—than if we had remained mounted on animals which tumbled down at every step.

The road was covered with muskets which had been thrown away, and our troopers took two apiece and a plentiful stock of cartridges, so that when the Cossacks ventured too near they were met by a brisk fire which quickly drove them off. When necessary, our men fought on foot; and in the evening we formed the sledges into a square, and lit our fires inside it. Marshal Ney and General Maison often came to pass the night there, finding it a safe place so long as we were pursued only by Cossacks. Doubtless it was the first time that a rear-guard

had gone in sledges; but owing to the frost it was the only practicable method, and it answered.

Thus we continued covering the retreat till December 13, when we at length saw once more the Niemen and Kovno, the last Russian town. Five months before we had entered the Empire of the Czar at the same spot. What a change had since then taken place in our fortunes, and what had been the loss of the French army! When the rear-guard entered Kovno, Marshal Ney found a weak battalion of 400 Germans doing duty as the only garrison. With these he joined such troops as were left to him, in order to defend the place as long as possible, and enable the sick and wounded to get away into Prussia. On hearing that Ney was coming, Murat went away to Gumbinnen.

On the 14th, Platoff's Cossacks, followed by two battalions of infantry and some guns, all drawn on sledges, attacked Kovno at several points; but Ney, helped by General Gérard, beat them off and held the town till night. Then he made us cross the Niemen on the ice, and was himself the last to leave Russian soil.

We were now in Prussia, among allies. But Ney, worn out with fatigue, unwell, and, moreover, considering that the campaign was over, left us at once, and joined the other marshals at Gumbinnen. Thenceforth the army had no longer a commander, and the remains of each regiment marched independently through Prussia. The Russians, being at war with that country, had the right to follow us on to its territory; but content with having reconquered their own, and not knowing whether they should appear in Prussia as allies or as enemies, they thought it best to await orders from their Government, and halted at the Niemen. Their hesitation gave us time to reach the towns of Prussia Proper.

Germans are for the most part humane, and many of them had friends or relations in the regiments which had gone with the French to Moscow. They received us well, and I must admit that, after sleeping for five months under the stars, it was delightful to find myself in a warm room and a good bed. But this rapid transition from an icy bivouac to comforts so long forgotten made me seriously ill. Nearly all the army suffered from the same cause; and we lost many, including Generals Eblé and Lariboisière of the artillery.

For all the decent reception which they gave us, the Prussians had not forgotten Jena, and the manner in which Napoleon had treated them in 1807, when he dismembered their kingdom. They hated us in secret, and at a signal from their King would have disarmed us and made us prisoners. General York, commanding the Prussian corps which the Emperor had so impru-

dently employed as the left wing of the Grand Army, being in cantonments between Riga and Tilsit, was already making terms with the Russians, and had sent Marshal Macdonald away, though he had enough shame left to refrain from arresting him. All classes in Prussia applauded General York's treachery; and as the provinces through which the French soldiers were just now passing, sick and disarmed, were full of Prussian troops, it is probable that the inhabitants would have tried to get hold of us had they not been restrained by fear for their King, who was at Berlin, surrounded by a French army under Marshal Augereau. This fear and a disavowal on the part of the King —the most honourable man in his kingdom—of General York's conduct, to the point of having him tried and condemned to death for high treason,[1] prevented a general rising against the French. We took advantage of its absence to get away and reach the banks of the Vistula.

My regiment crossed that river near the fortress of Grandenz, which we had passed on our way to Russia. This time the crossing was very dangerous, for, as a thaw had taken place some leagues higher up, the ice was a good foot deep in water, and ominous crackings were heard foretelling a general break-up. The order to cross instantly reached me, moreover, in the middle of a dark night; for the general had just learnt that the King of Prussia had left Berlin and fled into Silesia, that the people were getting uneasy, and there was reason to fear that they would rise against us as soon as the break-up of the ice prevented us from crossing the Vistula. It was, therefore, absolutely necessary to face the danger. This was very great, for the river is very wide opposite Grandenz, and the ice was full of wide cracks which could only be seen with difficulty by the light of fires kindled on both banks. As it was useless to think of taking our sledges across, we left them behind; and, leading the horses, preceded by men with poles to notify the cracks, we began our perilous crossing. We were up to mid-leg in half-frozen water, which made things worse for the sick and wounded; but bodily pain was nothing to the fear caused by the cracking of the ice, which threatened every moment to give way under our feet. A servant of one of my officers fell into a hole and never reappeared. At last we reached the other bank, where we passed the night warming ourselves in fishermen's huts. Next day we saw the Vistula thaw completely, so that if we had delayed a few hours we should all have been made prisoners.

[1] [The sentence does not seem to have taken effect, for in the following year we find General York von Wartenburg in command of Prussian forces. In 1814 he was created count, and he lived till 1830.]

CHAPTER LXXIV.

From the spot where we crossed the Vistula my regiment proceeded to the little town of Sweld, where it was cantoned before the war, and there I began the year 1813. That which was just over had surely been the most painful of my life.

We may now cast a glance at the causes which led to the failure of the Russian campaign. Of these the chief was undoubtedly the mistake into which Napoleon fell when he thought he could go to war in the north of Europe before making an end of that which he had long been waging in Spain, in which country his armies had just undergone heavy reverses when he made arrangements to attack the Russians at home. As the genuine French troops, when thus divided between the north and the south, were in both parts insufficient, Napoleon thought to make up by uniting battalions of his allies with them. It was like diluting generous wine with dirty water. The French divisions deteriorated; the allied troops remained as moderate as ever, and they it was who during the retreat threw the Grand Army into disorder.

A cause, not less fatal, of our reverses was the bad organisation, or rather total want of organisation, in the conquered countries. Instead of doing as we had done in the campaigns of Austerlitz, Jena, and Friedland, namely, establishing in the country left behind by the way small corps which could form from post to post regular communications, and so secure that our rear should be undisturbed, and that ammunition, solitary men, and trains of wounded should move in safety, all our available forces were imprudently pushed on to Moscow, until between that place and the Niemen there was, with the exception of Wilna and Smolensk, not a garrison, not a store, not a hospital. Two hundred leagues of country were thus given over to wandering bands of Cossacks; and the result was, that the sick when cured could not rejoin, and that, for want of convoys to evacuate them, all those wounded at the Moskwa had to be left for two months in the convent of Polotsk. They were still there when the retreat began; nearly all were captured, and those who reckoned that they had strength to follow the army died of fatigue and cold on the high road. Lastly, the retreating troops had no assured supply of food in districts which produce corn in abundance.

To the lack of small garrisons in our rear was also due the fact that out of more than 100,000 prisoners taken by the French in the course of the campaign, literally not one ever left Russia; the reason being that no organisation existed for passing them

to the rear. Accordingly they all escaped with ease and returned to the Russian army; thus repairing in some degree its losses, while ours increased daily.

The lack of interpreters also did us more mischief than might be supposed. How were we to obtain information, when we could not exchange a single word with the inhabitants? For instance, when General Partouneaux mistook his road on the banks of the Beresina and marched into Wittgenstein's camp, he had with him a peasant from Borisoff, who, knowing no French, tried to make him understand by expressive signs whose camp it was; but for lack of an interpreter he was not understood, and we lost 7,000 or 8,000 men. So again, in October, under very similar circumstances, the 3rd Lancers was taken by surprise through inability to understand its guide's advice, and lost 200 men. All this time the Emperor had in his army several corps of Polish cavalry, most of whose officers and sergeants could speak very well; but instead of placing some of these, as should have been done, beside every general and colonel, they were left with their regiments. I insist upon this point because, though the French army is that in which there is the least knowledge of foreign languages, and great inconvenience has often resulted therefrom, this has never corrected us of the carelessness with which we treat a matter so essential in war.

I have already remarked how great a mistake it was to form the two wings of the Grand Army from the Prussian and Austrian contingents. The Emperor must have regretted it keenly—first, when he learnt that the Austrians had let Tchichagoff's army pass to cut off our retreat at the Beresina; and secondly, when he was informed of General York's treachery. But still more bitter must Napoleon's regrets have been during and after the retreat; for if at the beginning of the campaign he had composed the wings of the Grand Army of French troops and taken the Prussians and Austrians to Moscow, these latter would have borne their share of miseries and losses, and would have returned not less weakened than the other corps, while the French troops composing the two wings would have come back to Napoleon intact. I will even go further, for I think that in order to weaken Prussia and Austria, the Emperor should have demanded of them contingents three and four times as great as those which they sent. People said after the event that those two states would not have complied with such a demand. I think differently; for the King of Prussia, who came to Dresden entreating Napoleon to be so good as to take his son for aide-de-camp, would have refused him nothing; while Austria, in the hope of recovering some of the rich provinces which he had

torn from her, would have done anything to oblige him. Napoleon was ruined by over-reliance on Prussia and Austria in 1812.

It has been asserted, and will long be repeated, that the burning of Moscow, which has been held to do honour to the bold resolution of the Russian Government and General Rostopchin, was the principal cause of the failure of our campaign. This assertion seems to me very doubtful. In the first place, the destruction of Moscow was not so complete but that there remained sufficient houses, churches, and barracks to lodge the whole army; as is proved by a report which I have seen in the possession of my friend General Gourgaud, at that time the Emperor's first orderly officer. It was not, then, lack of accommodation which compelled the French to leave Moscow; many people think that it was the fear of provisions failing; but that is another mistake, for the reports drawn up for the Emperor by Count Daru, commissary-general to the army, prove that even after the fire there were in that immense town more than sufficient provisions to maintain the army for six months. It was not, therefore, the fear of dearth which decided the Emperor to retreat; and, so far as that went, the Russian Government would not have attained its end if that had been its aim. It was, however, quite other than this; for, in fact, the court wished, by destroying the town, to strike a mortal blow at the old aristocracy of the Boyards, whose constant opposition had been centred there. Despotic as the Russian Government is, it has to reckon with a high nobility, whose displeasure has cost many emperors their lives. The most powerful members of that nobility having made Moscow the perpetual focus of their intrigues, the Government, ever viewing the increase of that city with fresh anxiety, found in the French invasion an excuse for destroying it. General Rostopchin, being one of the authors of this scheme, and charged with the execution of it, wished later on to throw the odium of his action on the French;[1] but the aristocracy was not deceived. It accused the Government so openly, and showed such displeasure at the useless burning of its palaces, that, in order to avoid personal disaster to himself, the Emperor Alexander was compelled, not only to allow the rebuilding of Moscow, but to banish Rostopchin, who, for all his protestations of patriotism, ended his days in Paris, detested by the Russian nobility.

Whatever the motives for the burning of Moscow may have been, I think that its preservation would have done the French more harm than good, since, in order to hold in check

[1] [In a pamphlet published in 1823 Rostopchin particularly insists that the fire was caused by accident.]

a city of more than 300,000 inhabitants always ready to revolt, it would have been necessary to weaken the army by keeping in Moscow a garrison of 50,000 men, who, when the moment for retreat came, would have been attacked by the populace; while, when nearly all the inhabitants had departed on account of the fire, a few patrols were sufficient to keep order. The only influence which Moscow may have had on the course of events arose from the fact that Napoleon, unable to comprehend that Alexander could not, under pain of being put to death by his subjects, sue for peace, thought that to evacuate the capital before concluding a treaty with the Russians would be to admit his inability to maintain himself there. He therefore persisted in remaining as long as possible at Moscow, and lost more than a month in waiting uselessly for proposals for peace. This delay settled our fate, because it gave time for the winter to declare itself before the French army could go and take up its quarters in Poland. But even if Moscow had remained intact the event would not have been altered. The catastrophe rose from the fact that the retreat had not been prepared for beforehand, and was not carried out in seasonable time; and yet it was easy to foresee that it would be very cold in Russia during the winter. But, I repeat, it was the hope of concluding peace which misled Napoleon, and this was the sole cause of his long stay at Moscow.

The losses of the Grand Army during the campaign were immense, but yet they have been much exaggerated. I have already said that I saw in General Gourgaud's possession a 'state' written all over with notes in Napoleon's hand, from which it appears that the number of men who crossed the Niemen was 155,400 French and 170,500 allies. On the return the Prussian and Austrian contingents went bodily over to the enemy, and nearly all the other allies had deserted individually during the retreat. An approximate calculation of the French loss cannot therefore be obtained by striking a balance between the effective force with which they entered on the campaign and that which remained when they crossed the Niemen for the second time. Now, from the 'states' presented in February 1813 it appears that 60,000 French recrossed the Niemen; so that 95,000 were missing. Of these 30,000 had been taken prisoners, and returned home after the peace in 1814. The total loss, therefore, by death of actual French was 65,000.[1]

The proportion of loss in my regiment was far smaller. When the campaign opened the 23rd Chasseurs were 1,018 all

[1][M. Thiers works out the figures of our losses as follows: 420,000 men crossed the Niemen, raised by subsequent reinforcements to 533,000; so that, of French and allies together, 300,000 must, according to him, have perished.]

told. Thirty more joined at Polotsk, bringing the total up to 1,048. Out of these I had 109 killed, 77 captured, 65 maimed, and 104 missing—355 in all; so that on the return of the troopers whom I had sent to Warsaw after the campaign, the regiment, when sent on beyond the Elbe in February 1813, could muster 693 mounted men, who had all shared in the Russian campaign. When the Emperor, who was at Paris looking after the reorganisation of the army, saw these figures he thought that there must be some mistake, and sent back my report, with orders to have a correct one made out. The second agreed with the first; whereupon the Emperor ordered General Sébastiani to inspect my regiment and draw up a 'state' of all the men present *by name*. All doubts being set at rest by this operation, and my statement confirmed, I received a few days later from the adjutant-general a letter in terms most flattering to the officers, and above all to myself. It was to the effect that Prince Berthier was instructed by the Emperor to express his Majesty's satisfaction for the care which we had taken of our men. The Emperor knew that the 23rd had not been to Moscow, and accordingly did not compare its loss with that of the regiments who had reached that point, but founded his estimate on that of the 2nd army corps, which, having been placed in similar conditions, should have lost only in the same proportion. He found, however, that the 23rd, though it had been more exposed than the other regiments to the enemy's fire, was the one which had brought back the greatest number of men; a result which his Majesty ascribed to the zeal of its colonel, its officers, and non-commissioned officers, no less than to the excellent tone of its men.

After reading out this letter in the presence of all the squadrons, I intended to keep it as a glorious heirloom for my family; but was withheld by a scruple which you will doubtless approve. It appeared scarcely seemly to deprive the regiment of a document, which, as it contained the proof of the Emperor's satisfaction with all, belonged to all. I therefore placed Berthier's letter among the regimental archives. I have repented this delicate attention; for almost before a year was out, the Government of Louis XVIII., on coming into power in 1814, amalgamated the 23rd Chasseurs with the 3rd of the same arm. The archives of the two corps were at first put together and badly looked after, until, at the general reduction of the army in 1815, they were lost in the vast gulf of the War Office. After the revolution of 1830 I got the adjutant-general to look for the letter; but it was in vain: I never succeeded in recovering it.

CHAPTER LXXV.

The situation of France in the early months of 1813 was most critical. In the south, our armies in Spain had suffered great reverses through the reduction of our force in the Peninsula, whence regiments were continually being drawn; while the English never stopped sending troops to Wellington. Thus in the course of 1812 this general had made a brilliant campaign. He had recaptured Ciudad Rodrigo, Badajoz, and Salamanca; had won the battle of the Arapiles,[1] and occupied Madrid; and now was threatening the Pyrenees. In the north, the seasoned soldiers whom Napoleon had led into Russia had nearly all fallen in battle or succumbed to their hardships. The Prussian army, still intact, had just joined with the Russians, and the Austrians were on the point of following their example. Lastly, the sovereigns, and still more the people of the Germanic Confederation, incited by England, were wavering in their alliance with France. The Prussian Baron von Stein, a man of resource and enterprise, seized this occasion to publish sundry pamphlets, in which he summoned all the Germans to shake off the yoke of Napoleon and reconquer their freedom. His appeal received all the more attention, since the maintenance of the French troops, which had been occupying Germany since 1806, had caused them great losses, to which had been added the confiscation of English goods, by reason of Napoleon's continental blockade. The Confederation of the Rhine would therefore have slipped from him if the sovereigns of the various states composing it had then made up their minds to yield to the wishes of their subjects. But so great was their habit of obedience to the French Emperor, and their fear of seeing him arrive at the head of the forces which he was rapidly organising and directing towards Spain, that none of them dared stir.

The majority of the French nation still confided in Napoleon. No doubt well-informed persons blamed him for having forced his army on to Moscow, and especially for having waited there till winter; but the mass of the people, accustomed to regard the Emperor as infallible, and having, moreover, no idea of what had really happened, or of the losses of our army in Russia, saw only the renown which the capture of Moscow had shed on our arms; so they were keen to give the Emperor the means of bringing victory back to his eagles. Each department and town was patriotically ready to find horses; but the levies of conscripts and money soon chilled their enthusiasm. Still, on the whole, the nation sacrificed itself with a good grace, squad-

[1] [Which we call the battle of Salamanca.]

rons and battalions rising as by magic from the ground. It was astonishing that, after all the draughts of men which France had undergone in the last twenty years, never had soldiers of such good quality been enlisted. This was due to several causes: first, there had been for some years in each of the 120 existing departments a so-called 'departmental' company of infantry—a kind of prætorian guard to the prefects, and formed by their picked men, who, being well looked after, and not overworked, had time to grow to their full strength, and, being regularly drilled and exercised, needed only their 'baptism of fire' to make them perfect troops. The companies varied in strength from 100 to 250 men; the Emperor sent them all to the army, where they were merged in line regiments. Secondly, a great number of conscripts from previous years, who, for one reason or another, had obtained leave to be placed at the 'tail' of their depôts, to wait until they were required, were called up. They too, as they grew older, had nearly all become strong and vigorous.

These were legal measures; but not so was the recalling of persons who had drawn a lucky number at the conscriptions and thus escaped service. All of these below the age of thirty were required to serve. This levy, therefore, furnished a number of men fit to undergo the fatigues of war. There was some grumbling, especially in the south and west; but so great was the habit of obedience, that nearly all the contingent went on duty. This submission on the part of the people led the Government to take a still more illegal step, which, as it touched the upper class, was still more dangerous. After having made men serve whom the ballot had exempted, they compelled those who had quite lawfully obtained substitutes to shoulder their muskets all the same. Many families had embarrassed, and even ruined themselves to keep their sons at home, for a substitute cost from 12,000 to 20,000 francs at that time, and this had to be paid down. There were some young men who had obtained substitutes three times over, and were none the less compelled to go; cases even occurred in which they had to serve in the same company with the man whom they had paid to take their place. This piece of iniquity was owing to the advice of Clarke the War Minister, and Savary the Police Minister, who persuaded the Emperor that, to prevent any movement of opposition to the Government during the war, sons of influential families must be got out of the country and sent to the army, to act in some sort as hostages. In order, however, to reduce the odium of this measure somewhat, the Emperor created, under the name of Guards of Honour, four cavalry regiments formed of young men of good education. They wore a brilliant hussar uniform, and had generals for their colonels.

To these more or less legal levies the Emperor added the produce of a forestalled conscription, and many excellent battalions formed of sailors, and artificers or gunners of marine artillery, all well-set men trained in handling arms, who had long been weary of their monotonous life in ports, and were eager to go and win glory along with their comrades of the land forces. They soon became formidable infantry, and amounted to 30,000. Lastly, the Emperor further weakened the army in Spain by taking from it not only some thousands of men to replenish his guard, but whole brigades and divisions of seasoned veterans.

On their side the Russians, and still more the Prussians, were making ready for war. The indefatigable Stein was visiting the provinces preaching a crusade against France, and organising his Tugendbund, or League of Virtue, the initiated in which swore to take up arms for German freedom. This society was acting openly in Prussia, which was already at war with Napoleon, and was working its way among the states and armies of the Confederation of the Rhine, in spite of some of the sovereigns; so that nearly all Germany was in secret our enemy; and even the contingents which it contributed to our forces were ready, as events soon showed, to betray us on the first opportunity. These events were, indeed, only delayed by the natural slowness of Germans, for the fragments of the French army, after recrossing the Elbe at the end of 1812, remained undisturbed on the left bank of that river during the first four months of the next year without the Russians and Prussians, on the opposite side, venturing to attack them. They did not deem themselves strong enough, although Prussia had called out the Landwehr; while Bernadotte, forgetting that he was a Frenchman by birth, had declared war against us and united the Swedish troops with those of the enemies of his native land.

During our stay on the left bank of the Elbe the French army continued short of cavalry, except for a few regiments of which mine was one. We were quartered in several villages not far from Magdeburg. While there I experienced a great disappointment. The Emperor, wishing to quicken the organisation of the new levies, and thinking that the presence of the regimental commanders at the depôts of their regiments would be useful for this purpose, decided that all colonels who had less than a certain number of men—for cavalry 400—under arms should return to France. As I had more than 600, I was obliged to stay, but I should have been glad to embrace my wife and the child which had been born while I was away. To the pain which this caused me was added another great annoyance: the good General Castex, to whom I had occasion to be so grateful during the

Russian campaign, left us for the mounted grenadiers of the guard. General Corbineau had been appointed aide-de-camp to the Emperor, and the two brigades were combined under General Exelmans; General Wathiez replaced General Castex, and General Maurin, Corbineau. But as these three generals had gone to France after the campaign, and I was the only colonel at hand, General Sébastiani, to whose corps the new division was to belong, put me in command of it. This gave me much extra duty, since I had in terrible weather often to visit the cantonments of the three other regiments. My wound in the knee, though it had closed, still gave me pain, and I do not know how I should have carried on my duties to the end of the winter had not General Wathiez rejoined at the end of a month and taken command.

A few days after this, without any request on my part, I received orders to repair to France and organise the recruits and remounts which were in great numbers at the depôt of my regiment. This was at Mons, in Belgium, which then formed part of the Empire. I started at once, and travelled quickly, and as I knew that, having been authorised to come to France on duty, I could not properly ask for any leave to go to Paris, I accepted the offer of my mother-in-law, Mme. Desbrières, to bring my wife and child to Mons. After a year of separation and all that danger, it was a great pleasure to see my wife again, and for the first time to kiss our little Alfred, now eight months old. It was one of the happiest days of my life. You may imagine with what joy I recalled how nearly my child had become an orphan on the day of his birth.

I remained at the depôt, very busy, till the end of June. The recruits were very numerous, fine men, and of a warlike race, coming nearly all from the neighbourhood of Mons, in the old province of Hainault, whence Austria, in the days when the Low Countries belonged to her, used to draw her best troopers. The inhabitants of this district are fond of horses, and take good care of them; but as those of the country were rather too powerful for chasseurs, I got leave to buy them in the Ardennes, and we were well remounted. At the depôt I found several good officers. Many of those who had served in the Russian campaign had gone there to recover from wounds or sickness, and the minister had sent me some young sub-lieutenants from the Cavalry School and from Saint-Cyr. Out of these elements I soon formed some squadrons, which doubtless were not perfect, but which could take their places, without too great contrast, among the veteran troopers whom I had left on the Elbe; and as soon as a squadron was ready it went off to the army.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

WHILE I was actively engaged in reconstituting my regiment, most of the colonels, especially those of the cavalry, being detained in France on the same duty, the allies crossed the Elbe and hostilities recommenced. The Emperor had left Paris, and on April 25 was at Naumberg in Saxony, at the head of 170,000 men. Only a third of these were French, since some of the troops who had recently been sent forward to Germany had not yet reached the seat of war. The remaining two-thirds were formed by the contingents from the Confederation of the Rhine, the greater part of whom were little inclined to fight for Napoleon. General Wittgenstein, who since our disaster at the Beresina had acquired some reputation, although the elements had done us much more harm than his combinations, was commander-in-chief of the united Russian and Prussian troops. These to the number of 300,000 appeared on April 28 before Napoleon's army in the neighbourhood of Leipzig.

On May 1 a brisk engagement took place at Poserna, in the plain rendered famous by the death of Gustavus Adolphus, and Marshal Bessières was killed by a cannon-ball. The Emperor regretted him more than did the army, which had never forgotten that it was through his advice that Napoleon had been hindered on the evening of the battle of the Moskwa from bringing his guard into action and thus completing his victory, whereby the aspect of events would have been changed and the complete destruction of the Russian troops brought about. On the day after Marshal Bessières' death, while Napoleon was continuing his march on Leipzig, he was unexpectedly attacked in flank by the allies, who had crossed the river Elster before daybreak. This battle, which was known as Lutzen, was keenly contested. The troops recently arrived from France fought with the utmost valour, the marine regiments being especially distinguished. The enemy were beaten at all points, and withdrew towards the Elbe; but the French, having scarcely any cavalry, could take but few prisoners, so that their victory was incomplete. Nevertheless, it produced a great moral effect all over Europe and especially in France, as showing that our troops had preserved all their superiority, and that nothing but the frosts of Russia had vanquished them in 1812.

The Emperor Alexander and the King of Prussia, who, after

having witnessed the defeat of their armies at Lutzen, had gone to Dresden, were obliged to leave it on Napoleon's approach. On the 8th he took possession of that town, where he was soon joined by his ally the King of Saxony. After a short stay at Dresden the French crossed the Elbe and pursued the allies, coming up with their rear-guard and beating it at Bischofswerda.

The Emperor Alexander, being dissatisfied with Wittgenstein, had himself taken command of the allied forces; but being in his turn defeated by Napoleon in the action at Burtkau, he probably perceived that he was unequal to direct the troops, for he soon ceased to lead them. The allies halted and entrenched themselves at Bautzen, but the Emperor caused Ney to turn their position, and on May 21 gained a victory which was again rendered incomplete for want of cavalry. Still the enemy had 18,000 men disabled, and fled in great disorder.

On the 22nd the French came up with the Russian rear-guard in front of the defile of Reichenbach. Napoleon's small force of cavalry was commanded by General Latour-Maubourg, who led it with such energy that the enemy were driven in and abandoned the field after heavy loss. That of the French, though not very numerous, was of a kind to be much felt. General Bruyères, an excellent cavalry officer, had both his legs shot off, and died of the wound. But the most disastrous event of that day was caused by a ball which, after killing General Kirgener, Marshal Lannes' brother-in-law, mortally wounded Duroc, the grand marshal of the palace—a man beloved by everybody, and Napoleon's oldest and best friend. He survived his wound a few hours, and the Emperor went to him and evinced the deepest feeling. His despair was most touching; the witnesses of that heart-breaking scene observed that, when obliged to leave his friend to resume the command of the army, Napoleon, on parting from him, bathed in tears, appointed a meeting in a 'better world.'

Meanwhile the French army, following up its success, had reached Silesia, and occupied Breslau, the capital, on June 1. Then the allies, the Prussians most of all, struck with alarm at their critical position, and recognising that, for all their big words, they were unable by themselves to stop the French, wished to gain time, in the hope that Austria might make an end of her hesitation and join forces with them. They sent, therefore, to sue for an armistice, which might, it was said, through the mediation of Austria, lead to a definite treaty of peace. Napoleon thought it right to grant this armistice, and it was signed on June 4, to last till August 10.

While Napoleon was marching from victory to victory,

Marshal Oudinot got beaten at Lackau, losing 1,100 men. The Emperor's hope was that during the armistice his reinforcements would come up, and be at hand if a fresh campaign should be necessary. In spite of this, however, several of the generals regretted that the Emperor had not followed up his advantages. They said that if the armistice gave us the time to bring up our reserves it would do the same for the Russians and Prussians. The Swedes were already on the march to assist them, and they had hopes of the Austrians, who, though not ready at that moment, would have more than two months to mobilise their large army.

When I heard at Mons of the victories of Lutzen and Bautzen, I was vexed at not having shared in them; but my regret was diminished when I learnt that my regiment had not been there. It was, in fact, still in front of Magdeburg. M. Lacour, an old aide-de-camp of General Castex, was in command of it as senior major. He was a brave officer; but had half-educated himself with the help of books, which gave him a self-conceit out of keeping with soldierly ways. I shall have to speak later on of the loss which his want of skill in command brought on the regiment. At the depôt I admitted as second major M. Pozac, a brilliant officer in all respects, who had won a sword of honour at Marengo.

Towards the end of June the task of organising the new levies was completed, and the colonels were ordered to return to their duty with the army. I had therefore to part from my family, with whom I had been spending happy days; but honour and duty had to be obeyed, and I took the road back to Germany. I went, in the first place, to Dresden, whither the Emperor had summoned all the colonels to question them as to the composition of the new detachments. In regard to this I learned a thing which nearly broke my heart. I had organised four splendid squadrons of 150 men apiece. The two first, and luckily the finest, had joined the regiment; but the third had by the Emperor's orders been taken off to Hamburg, and drafted into the 26th Chasseurs, one of the weakest regiments in the army. This was quite regular, and I submitted without a murmur. But it was otherwise when I was informed that the fourth squadron, having come under the notice of Jerome, King of Westphalia, at Cassel, had taken his fancy so much, that he had on his own authority embodied it in his guard. I knew that the Emperor, angry at the liberty taken by his brother in thus carrying off his soldiers, had ordered them to resume their journey at once, and I hoped to get them back; but Jerome got at some of the Emperor's aides-de-camp, and they

represented that as the King of Westphalia's guard was composed of untrustworthy Germans, it would be well to let him have a French squadron on whom he could count; that, further, the King had just given them handsome uniforms at his own cost; and, lastly, that even without this squadron the 23rd Chasseurs would be one of the strongest regiments in the French cavalry. Anyhow, my squadron was incorporated in the Westphalian body-guard, object as I might. I could not reconcile myself to this loss, and thought it very unjust that I should thus be deprived of the fruit of all my trouble.

I rejoined my regiment not far from the Oder. It was cantoned with the rest of Exelmans' division near the little town of Freistadt. M. Wathiez, my new brigadier, had been my captain in the 25th Chasseurs, and was always very kind to me. We were quartered in a comfortable château, named Herzogwaldau, in the centre of the village which my troopers occupied. While we were staying there a curious incident took place. A man named Tautz, the only bad character in my regiment, got very drunk, and threatened an officer, who put him under arrest. He was tried and condemned to death; and the sentence was approved. When the guard, under the regimental staff-sergeant, Boivin, went to fetch Tautz out to be shot, they found him in his cell perfectly naked, pleading the extreme heat. The staff-sergeant, a brave soldier, but of intellect not equal to his courage, instead of making the culprit dress, merely made him put on a cloak. When they reached the drawbridge across the broad moat of the citadel, Tautz flung the cloak in the faces of his guard, jumped into the water, swam across, and, reaching the shore, went off to join the enemy on the other side of the Oder. He was never heard of again. I reduced the staff-sergeant for his lack of vigilance; but he soon regained his epaulettes by an act of courage which I shall presently have to recount.

The new squadrons brought up the strength of the regiment to 993, nearly 700 of whom had been in the Russian campaign. The newly joined men were strongly built, and nearly all had served in the legion of the department of Jemmapes, which had made their training easy. I blended them with the old squadrons. Both sides were preparing for the struggle: but the enemy had used their time to raise up a powerful adversary for us, when they persuaded Austria to march.

The Emperor's *fête* fell on August 15, but as the armistice ended on the 10th, he ordered it to be kept earlier, and the festivities of 'St. Napoleon's Day' were held in the cantonments. This was the last time that the French army cele-

brated its Emperor's birthday. There was little enthusiasm; for even the least foreseeing of the officers realised that we were on the eve of great changes, and their forebodings were reflected in the minds of the subalterns. Yet each was ready to do his duty, though with small hope of success, for we were vastly inferior to the enemy in numbers. Our allies of the Confederation of the Rhine were wavering, and the Saxon General Thielmann with his brigade had already gone over to the Prussians. So there was much uneasiness and little confidence among our troops.

Just then we heard that General Moreau had returned to Europe. After his condemnation in 1804, in consequence of Pichegru's conspiracy, he had gone to America. Now his hatred of Napoleon made him forget his duty to his country, and he tarnished his laurels by joining the ranks of the enemies of France. But the new Coriolanus soon suffered the penalty which his conduct deserved.

Meanwhile a vast circle was forming round the French army. A Russian corps was in Mecklenburg; Bernadotte, with a force of Swedes, Russians, and Prussians, occupied Berlin; the two main armies of Russia and Prussia were in Silesia; 40,000 Austrians at Linz, and their main force at Prague. Behind this front line, numbering altogether 560,000, were immense reserves.

Murat, who had gone to Naples after the Russian campaign, rejoined the Emperor at Dresden. The Coalition—that is to say, the Austrians, Russians, and Prussians—opened the campaign by a piece of bad faith unworthy of civilised nations. Although, according to the latest convention, hostilities were not to recommence before August 16, they attacked our outposts on the 14th, and set the greater part of their troops in movement in consequence of Jomini's treachery. Up to that day only two Saxon generals, Thielmann and Longuereau, had debased themselves by going over to the enemy; the uniform of a French general had so far been clear of such a stain. This was inflicted upon it by a Swiss, General Jomini. That wretch had been a mere clerk in the office of the ministry of the Helvetic Republic, on a salary of 1,200 francs, when General Ney was sent to Berne in 1800 by the First Consul to arrange with the Swiss Government about the defences of that state, which was then our ally. The duties of the clerk Jomini, which had to do with keeping the register of the forces of the Republic, brought him in contact with Ney, who was thus able to judge of his talents, which were great. Yielding to his entreaties, Ney got him admitted as lieutenant, and soon after as captain in a Swiss regiment formed for the French

service. His liking for him increasing, he got him made a French officer, took him as aide-de-camp, and gave him the means of publishing his works on the art of war—works which, though they have been overpraised, are certainly not without merit. Thanks to this powerful protection, Jomini rose rapidly, and when hostilities recommenced, in 1813, was a major-general, and chief of the staff to Ney. Then, however, seduced by the brilliant offers of the Russians, and forgetting his duty to the marshal, the Emperor, and his adopted country, he deserted; taking with him statements of the strength of the army and notes relating to the plan of campaign. Fearing, moreover, lest Napoleon, on hearing of his flight, should change his plans, he urged the allies to resume hostilities two days before the date fixed. To the general surprise of Europe, Alexander rewarded his treason by making him his own aide-de-camp; an act which so shocked the Emperor of Austria, that one day, when dining with Alexander, seeing Jomini among the guests, he said audibly: 'I know that sovereigns sometimes have to employ deserters, but I do not see how they can admit them to their staff and their table!'[1]

Jomini's treason was a most disastrous blow to Napoleon, since many of his army corps were attacked while concentrating and obliged to surrender important positions for want of time to arrange for the defence of them. Meantime, the Emperor, finding the enemy forewarned and on their guard to prevent his intended march on Bohemia, resolved to attack the Prussians in Silesia, and to make the French forces who had been compelled to retire before Blucher resume the offensive in that quarter. On August 20 he reached Löwenberg and attacked a considerable force of the Coalition; and after various actions lasting over three days the enemy retired, with a loss of 7,000 men, behind the Katzbach.

During one of the numerous engagements of those days, Wathiez's brigade, while pursuing the enemy, was stopped by a broad and muddy brook flowing into the Bober. The only way of crossing was by two wooden bridges a quarter of a league apart, and swept by the Russian artillery. The 24th Chasseurs, now commanded by Colonel Schneit, attacked the left-hand bridge with its wonted intrepidity; but the 11th Dutch Hussars, which was sent to carry that on the right, behaved less well. In vain did its colonel, M. Liégeard, the only Frenchman in the regiment, call on his troopers; all were too

[1] [It should be said that the accusation against Jomini of having taken documents with him when he went over to the enemy has been contradicted. See Thiers, xvi. pp. 275, 276.]

much alarmed to stir. My regiment was in the second line, awaiting its turn; and as it got nearly as many balls as the 11th, I hastened forward to help the colonel of that regiment in persuading his men to charge, as the only means of silencing the fire. My efforts, however, being vain, and as it was clear that the cowardice of the Dutchmen would entail heavy loss on my regiment, I took my men to the front and was just about to send them forward, when I saw the left-hand bridge break under the first section of the 24th, drowning many men and horses. The Russians had prepared this catastrophe by ingeniously sawing through the beams which held up the flooring of the bridge. At the sight of this unfortunate accident I became afraid that the enemy would have set a similar trap at the bridge towards which my column was moving, so I halted there a moment to examine. It was a difficult business, for not only were the enemy's guns trained on that bridge, but it was open to the fire of one of his battalions. Just as I was about to call for a volunteer to undertake the duty, with the certainty of finding one, Staff-sergeant Boivin (whom I had reduced for letting the condemned man escape) dismounted and came up to me, saying that it was not fair that one of his comrades should be killed in reconnoitring the bridge, and begging me to let him do it in order to retrieve his fault. This noble determination pleased me, and I said: 'Go, sir, and you will find your epaulette at the other end of the bridge.'

Boivin advanced calmly in the thick of the fire, examined the flooring, went under the bridge, and came back to assure me that all was sound. I reinstated him; and having remounted he placed himself at the head of the leading squadron. The Russians retired without awaiting our attack. Next month, when the Emperor reviewed the regiment and made several promotions, I got M. Boivin appointed sub-lieutenant.

Our new general, M. Wathiez, gained the esteem and affection of the troops in these fights. General Exelmans, commanding the division, was only known to us by public report, which affirmed him to be a man of brilliant valour, but often lacking in the judgment which a commander should have. We had a proof of this in the following incident. Just as the division was executing a retreat, which my regiment had to cover, General Exelmans, under the plea of setting a trap for the Prussian advance-guard, ordered me to place at his disposal my picked troops, and my twenty-five best sharpshooters. He put Major Lacour in command of them, and then posted these 150 men in the middle of a plain surrounded by woods, and, after forbidding them to stir without his orders, went off and forgot

all about them. The enemy came up, and, seeing the solitary detachment, halted, suspecting an ambush. To make sure, they sent a few men one by one into the woods to right and left, and, hearing no shots, increased the number till our troopers were completely surrounded. Some of the officers observed to Lacour that his retreat was being cut off. Lacour, a brave soldier, but not original, stuck to the letter of his orders. It did not occur to him that General Exelmans might have forgotten him, and that it would be as well to send and let him know, or at least reconnoitre the ground by which he might retreat. He had been told to stay there, and stay he would, whether his men were killed or taken.

While Major Lacour was carrying out his orders in the style rather of a sergeant than of a field-officer, the division was retiring. General Wathiez and I, not seeing the detachment return, and not knowing where to find Exelmans, who was galloping across country, began to feel very uneasy. I obtained permission from the general to go back for Major Lacour, and, starting with a squadron at full gallop, I got up in time to witness a terrible sight for a colonel who loved his men. After overlapping both flanks and even the rear of our detachment, the enemy attacked it in front with infinitely superior forces, so that 700 or 800 Prussian lancers surrounded our 150 men, who, to complete their misfortunes, had no way of retreat save a wooden foot-bridge over a deep mill-stream. Our troopers could only march in single file, so that there was a block, and my picked company lost several men. Some of them then perceived a large courtyard, and, thinking that it opened upon the stream, and that they would find a bridge there, entered it, followed by the whole detachment. The stream did indeed run along the yard, but at that point it formed the mill-dam, the banks of which were sustained by large slippery slabs, rendering the approach exceedingly difficult for horses, and giving a great advantage to the enemy, who had closed the gates of the courtyard in order to make sure of capturing the French. At this critical moment I appeared on the other side of the stream with my squadron. I made the men dismount, four of them leaving their horses in the charge of one ; the remainder, armed with their carbines, hastened towards the foot-bridge. This was guarded by a squadron of Prussians, but having remained on horseback, and with no firearms but pistols, they could not resist the fire from our carbines, and were forced to retire some hundred paces, leaving about forty killed and wounded on the ground. Those of my troopers who were shut up in the courtyard thought to take advantage of this respite to force the great

gate; but I called out to them to do nothing of the kind. It would have done them no good, for in order to join me they would have been obliged to cross the foot-bridge on horseback, which they could only have done in single file, offering their flank and rear to the Prussians, who would promptly have charged and exterminated them. The bank was planted with riverside trees, among which infantry could defy a large number of cavalry in perfect safety. I therefore placed my dismounted men as skirmishers along the stream, and as soon as they were in touch with the courtyard of the mill, I ordered those who were within it to dismount also and take their carbines; then, while a hundred of them kept the enemy off with their fire, the remainder could pass the horses along over the bridge.

While this movement was being executed in perfect order, the Prussian lancers, furious at seeing their prey on the point of escaping, tried by a vigorous attack to throw our retreat into disorder. But their horses were hampered by the willow branches, by pools of water, and numerous holes, and, being scarcely able to walk over the muddy ground, never succeeded in reaching our skirmishers, whose fire, well aimed at a short distance, caused them considerable loss. However, the Prussian officer who commanded the charge pushed boldly on to the middle of our line and shot one of my best officers, Lieutenant Bachelet, through the head. I regretted him keenly, but he was promptly avenged by his men, for several bullets laid the Prussian officer dead beside him.

The fall of their leader, their heavy loss, and their inability to touch us determined the enemy to retire. I took up my wounded and retreated unpursued. In this deplorable affair my regiment lost an officer and nine troopers killed and thirteen prisoners, among the latter Lieutenant Maréchal. The loss of these twenty-three men grieved me the more that it was needless, and fell entirely on the bravest men of the regiment, most of whom were marked for decoration or promotion. I was never able to console myself for this check, and it put the finishing stroke to our dislike of Exelmans. He got off with a reprimand from General Sébastiani and the Emperor, to whom he had been recommended by his friendship with Murat. Old General Saint-Germain, a former colonel of the 23rd Chasseurs, and indeed the man who had made the regiment, for which he had preserved a great regard, said openly that Exelmans deserved an exemplary punishment. A quarrel ensued, and they would have come to blows had not the Emperor personally intervened. Major Lacour, whose bad management had so largely contributed to the disaster, lost my confidence from that day forth.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

After beating the Prussian corps under Field-Marshal Blucher, who had retired behind the Katzbach river, the Emperor gave orders to pursue on the following day, but on learning that the Grand Army of the Coalition, 200,000 strong, under Prince Schwarzenberg, had debouched on August 22 from the mountains of Bohemia and was marching on Saxony, Napoleon took his whole guard, Latour-Maubourg's cavalry, and several divisions of infantry, and made his way by forced marches back to Dresden, into which Marshal Saint-Cyr had thrown himself with his troops, hastily withdrawn from the camp of Pirna. On leaving Silesia the Emperor had ordered Marshal Ney to follow him and left Macdonald in command of the army on the Bober, consisting of the 3rd, 5th, and 11th corps of infantry, and the 2nd of cavalry, which, with the artillery, formed an effective force of 75,000 men. As events showed, the command of such a mass of combatants was a task too heavy for Macdonald.

As you will have observed, the larger the number of troops engaged the less I describe their movements in detail. The work would be so great that I fear I should not be capable of performing it satisfactorily, and it would render the reading of these Memoirs too wearisome. I shall, therefore, relate the events of the war of 1813 more concisely than I have done in the case of my previous campaigns.

On August 28, 200,000 of the allies invested the town of Dresden, the fortifications of which were hardly able to resist a *coup-de-main*, and Marshal Saint-Cyr's situation with only 17,000 French became extremely critical. The enemy was badly served by his spies, so that he did not know that Napoleon was close at hand, and, confiding in his numbers, put off the attack till next day. His confidence was increased by seeing two Westphalian regiments arrive, who having deserted Jerome joined the Austrians. Marshal Saint-Cyr was anxiously awaiting an attack on the morning of the 25th, but he was reassured by the arrival of the Emperor, who entered Dresden early that

day. A few moments later, the enemy, expecting to have to deal with Saint-Cyr's corps only, marched on the town so impetuously that they carried several redoubts. The Russians and Prussians, having occupied the suburb of Pirna, tried to drive in the Freiberg gate, when, by an order from the Emperor, the gate suddenly opened and out marched a column of infantry from the imperial guard, its leading brigade commanded by General Cambronne. It was like the appearance of the head of Medusa; the enemy recoiled in terror, their guns were captured, and the gunners killed on their carriages. Similar sorties were made from all the gates of Dresden with a like result; the enemy evacuated the captured redoubts and fled into the surrounding country, charged by Napoleon's cavalry. They lost 5,000 men disabled and 3,000 prisoners. The French had 2,500 killed or wounded, among the latter five generals.

Next day the French army attacked first, though its strength was less than that of its opponents by 87,000 men. There was at first a brisk and bloody engagement; but the rain falling in torrents on a heavy soil soon turned the battlefield into pools of muddy water, in which our troops moved with great difficulty. Nevertheless, they continued to advance, and the Young Guard was making the enemy's left give ground, when the Emperor, perceiving that Prince Schwarzenberg had made the mistake of insufficiently supporting his left wing, crushed it with Victor's infantry and Latour-Maubourg's cavalry. Murat, who commanded this part of the French line, showed himself more brilliant than ever; for after forcing the defile of Cotta, he turned and cut off from the Austrian army Klenau's corps, hurling himself upon it at the head of the carabineers and cuirassiers. His movement was decisive; Klenau could not resist that terrible charge. Nearly all his battalions were compelled to lay down their arms, and two other divisions of infantry shared their fate.

While Murat was thus beating the enemy on their left, their right was being routed by the Young Guard, so that by three o'clock the victory was secured and the Coalition forces in retreat towards Bohemia. They left that day on the field eighteen stands of colours, twenty-six guns, and 40,000 men, half of whom were prisoners. The heaviest loss fell on the Austrian infantry. Percussion muskets were, of course, hardly known at that time, and the infantry used flint-locks, which became almost useless when the priming had got wet. Now as the rain had never stopped all day this had much to do with the defeat of the infantry by our cavalry. In regard to this a curious thing happened. A cuirassier division under General

Bordesoulle, finding itself in front of a strong division of Austrian infantry formed in square, summoned it to surrender. The Austrian general refused; and Bordesoulle, going forward, pointed out to him that not one of his muskets could be fired. The Austrian general replied that his men could defend themselves with the bayonet, and would be all the better able to do so that the French horses were up to their hocks in mud, and could not meet them with the breast-to-breast shock in which the strength of cavalry lies. 'I will break up your square with artillery.' 'But you have none; it has stuck in the mud.' 'Well, if I show you the guns behind my leading regiment, will you surrender?' 'I shall have no choice, for I shall have no means left of defence.' Thereupon the French general brought up a battery of six guns to within thirty paces, and the gunners stood with lighted matches ready to fire. Then the Austrian division laid down its arms. It was indeed the artillery that played the principal part in this battle. Napoleon doubled the teams by taking horses from his commissariat wagons, to enable the guns to move, and our field pieces did great execution. It was a ball from one of them which struck Moreau.

Public rumour had some time back announced the return to Europe of their once famous French general, and added that he had taken service among his country's foes; but few people believed the report. It was, however, confirmed in a curious way on the evening of the battle of Dresden. Our advance-guard was pursuing the routed enemy, when one of our hussars observed at the entrance of the village of Notnitz a magnificent Danish hound. The dog seeming to be looking uneasily for its master, the soldier called it and took hold of it. On its collar were the words 'I am General Moreau's dog.' Then they heard from the village priest that General Moreau had just had both his legs amputated in his house. A French cannon-ball had dropped among the Emperor of Russia's staff and broken both the famous deserter's legs, going through his horse's body. This happened just as the allied armies were defeated; and the Emperor Alexander, fearing lest Moreau should fall into the hands of the French, made some grenadiers carry him in their arms until the pursuit slackened, and it was possible to dress his wound and take both legs off at the thigh. The Saxon clergyman witnessed this terrible operation, and said that Moreau, knowing his danger, cursed himself, and incessantly repeated: 'What? I, Moreau, I to die among the enemies of France, struck down by a French ball!'[1] No man in the

[1] [Another version of Moreau's end is given. See p. 122.]

French army regretted him when it was known that he had borne arms against his country. A Russian flag of truce came to claim the dog on behalf of his aide-de-camp, Colonel Rapatel, and the animal was sent back, but without his collar. This was sent to the King of Saxony, and now is among the curiosities in the Dresden Gallery.

Meanwhile Prince Schwarzenberg had given orders to his beaten troops to rendezvous at Teplitz. The Austrians effected their retreat by the Dippoldiswald valley, the Russians and Prussians by the Telnitz road, and the remains of Klenau's corps by that to Freiberg. Napoleon accompanied the pursuing corps as far as Pirna; but just before reaching that town he was attacked by sudden illness, with slight vomiting, the result of the fatigue caused by five days in the saddle under incessant rain. One of the inconveniences to which sovereigns are exposed is that there are always persons about them who, to show their attachment, profess to be alarmed at their smallest ailments, and must take exaggerated precautions. This was what happened in the present case. The grand equerry, Caulaincourt, advised Napoleon to return to Dresden, and the other high officials did not venture to give him the far better advice to go on to Pirna, only a league further. The Young Guard was there already, and the Emperor would have not only found there the rest which he needed, but have been in a position to direct the movements of the pursuing forces, for which at Dresden he was too far off. He left to Marshals Mortier and Saint-Cyr the task of supporting Vandamme, who, with the 1st corps, had been detached three days ago from the Grand Army. He had beaten a Russian corps and now was threatening the enemy's rear, blocking the road from Dresden to Prague, and occupying Peterswald; whence he could command the basin of Kulm and the town of Teplitz. But Napoleon's return to Dresden cancelled his recent success and led to a great disaster, which contributed powerfully to the fall of the Empire. I will give a brief account of that famous overthrow.

General Vandamme was a brave and good officer. He had acquired fame in the first Revolutionary wars, and under the Empire had constantly been in chief command of army corps, so that people were surprised that he had not got his marshal's baton; but this was due to his rough and overbearing manner. After his defeat his detractors said that it was the hope of earning that honour which had led him to throw himself so madly at the head of 20,000 men across the road of 200,000, and try to stop their passage. The truth, however, is that the chief of

the staff had told him that he would be supported by Mortier and Saint-Cyr, and had given him a distinct order to capture Teplitz and cut off the enemy's retreat; so that he was bound to obey. Believing himself sure of support, he descended boldly towards Kulm on August 29, and thence, pushing the enemy before him, tried to reach Teplitz. It is certain that if Mortier and Saint-Cyr had carried out their instructions, the Coalition forces, engaged in horrible roads and cut off from Bohemia, would have been attacked in front and rear and forced to surrender. Then the very persons who afterwards found fault with Vandamme would have been loud in his praise.

However this may be, when Vandamme arrived before Teplitz on the morning of the 30th, and found himself in front of Ostermann's Russian division, he attacked it vigorously; all the more so that he saw an army corps descending from Peterswald by the route which he had taken the day before, and had reason to believe that the promised aid from Mortier and Saint-Cyr was coming. But the newcomers were no friends, but two strong Prussian divisions under General Kleist. Marching on Kulm, by Jomini's advice, they had passed unperceived between Mortier's and Saint-Cyr's armies; owing largely to Saint-Cyr's indisposition to back up one of his colleagues, and its influence in the present case on Mortier. Neither stirred, though by co-operating with the brave effort of Vandamme they would infallibly have brought about the total defeat of the enemy. As it was, their columns, infantry, cavalry, artillery, baggage wagons, were huddled pell-mell in the narrow gorges of the mountains separating Silesia and Bohemia. Thus, instead of the expected aid, General Vandamme saw General Kleist's two divisions, which straightway attacked him. Continuing to make head against Ostermann's Russians, he faced about with his rear-guard and attacked Kleist furiously. The enemy was giving way at all points when immense reinforcements brought their total numbers above 60,000; and Vandamme's 15,000 were so hopelessly out-numbered that he was compelled to take steps for retiring on the corps of Saint-Cyr and Mortier, which, according to the information he had received from Berthier, he still believed to be at hand. But on reaching the Telnitz defile, the French found it occupied by Kleist's army, and their passage entirely barred. Our battalion, however, led by General Corbineau's cavalry, which even in this rough country had claimed their right to act as advance-guard, dashed on the Prussians so impetuously that they overthrew them and made their way

through the defile, first capturing the whole of the enemy's artillery. They were, however, owing to the bad state of the roads, only able to take away the horses.

Soldiers who have seen service will understand that such a success can only be attained at the cost of much bloodshed, and that after so terrible a fight the 1st corps was greatly reduced. Yet Vandamme, surrounded by forces ten times his own, refused to surrender; and placing himself at the head of his only two available battalions, charged into the midst of the enemy, in the hope of finding his death there. But his horse was killed, a strong body of Russians flung themselves on him, and he was taken prisoner. On the other side, generals, officers, and privates admired Vandamme's courage, and felt the greatest esteem for him: but, incredible as it may seem, the kind treatment ceased and was replaced by insults when the prisoner was taken to Prague. The Emperor of Russia and his brother, the Grand Duke Constantine, addressed him in insulting terms; and the Grand Duke actually snatched away his sword. Vandamme indignantly exclaimed, 'My sword is easy to take here; it would have been nobler to come and fetch it on the battlefield. But you seem to like your trophies to be cheap.' Thereupon the Emperor Alexander, in a rage, ordered the arrest of Vandamme, calling him 'plunderer' and 'brigand.' Vandamme replied, looking Alexander proudly in the face: 'I am no plunderer or brigand;[1] and, anyhow, history will not reproach me with having murdered my own father!' Alexander turned pale at this allusion to the assassination of his father, Paul I., to which he had been accused by rumour of having assented from fear of sharing the same fate, and quickly left the room. The French general, strictly watched, was taken to Wintka, on the Siberian frontier, and did not return home till after the peace of 1814.

The battle of Kulm cost the French army 2,000 killed and 8,000 prisoners, including their general. The remainder of Vandamme's troops, to the number of 10,000, cut their way through and rejoined Saint-Cyr and Mortier. Those two marshals had been grievously wanting in their duty when they failed to pursue the enemy, and halted, the first at Reinhardsgrimme, and the other at Pirna, whence they could hear the sound of the battle which the brave and unfortunate Vandamme was maintaining. It may seem surprising that Napoleon had

[1] [According to a story told by Scott, Napoleon said that 'if he had had two Vandammes in his service he must have made one hang the other.']

not sent an aide-de-camp from Dresden to make sure that Saint-Cyr and Mortier had started, according to his instructions, to succour Vandamme. As those two marshals did not carry out their orders, they deserved to be tried by court martial.[1] But the French army was by this time so exhausted that if the Emperor had wished to punish all those who showed lack of energy he must have dispensed with the services of nearly all his marshals. For this reason, and because it was more than ever necessary to conceal his disasters, he confined himself to reprimanding Saint-Cyr and Mortier. Indeed it was not only at Kulm that his troops had suffered defeat, but at every point of the long line which they held.

[1] [M. Thiers (xvi. 351), when discussing the shares which the marshal and the Emperor himself had in the responsibility for the disaster, says: 'It was natural that Marshal Mortier should await Napoleon's commands without moving, and the definite order to support Vandamme only reached him during the 30th, by which time the catastrophe had already taken place. It is, therefore, impossible to find any fault with him.' This despatch, signed by Berthier, is in the possession of the Duke of Treviso.]

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

It has been truly said that in the later campaigns of the Empire the fighting was seldom well managed when Napoleon did not direct it in person. It is to be regretted that the great captain did not realise this, and put so much trust in his lieutenants, many of whom—though, as we had plenty of evidence, they had no lack of self-confidence—were not up to their work. Instead of ordering the commanders of the detached corps to keep as much as possible on the defensive until he could come up with strong reserves to crush the opposing forces, the Emperor allowed them too much latitude; and as each of them wanted to have his own Austerlitz, they often attacked when it was unwise, and got beaten through their own fault. This was what happened to Marshal Oudinot, to whom Napoleon had given a large army composed of Bertrand's and Reynier's corps, with orders to watch the combined Prussian and Swedish troops, who were near Berlin under the command of Bernadotte. Marshal Oudinot, being weaker than his opponent, should have tried to gain time, but the habit of going straight ahead, the sight of the towers of Berlin, and the fears of not justifying Napoleon's confidence, urged him on. He sent Bertrand's corps straight forward and was beaten, which did not stop Oudinot from persisting in his aim of capturing Berlin, but he lost a great battle at Gross-Beeren, and was compelled to retire with heavy loss towards Wittenberg.

A few days later, Marshal Macdonald, whom Napoleon had left on the Katzbach at the head of several corps, thought that he would take advantage of the freedom which the Emperor's absence gave him to try to win a battle, and wipe out the memory of his defeat on the Trebbia in the Italian campaign of 1799; but he got beaten again. Personally brave though he was, he was always unlucky in war; not that he lacked ability, but because he was, like an Austrian general, too limited and too exclusive in his strategy. Before a battle he could chalk out a plan which was nearly always good, but he should have modified it according to circumstances, and this he was too

slow-witted to do. He acted like some chess-players, who can play very well as long as they are directing both sides, but are at a loss in a real game when the adversary moves his pieces otherwise than they had expected. Thus on August 26, the very day when the Emperor was winning a brilliant victory before Dresden, Macdonald lost a battle which the French call the Katzbach, and the Germans Jauer or Janowitz.

The French army, consisting of 75,000 men, including my regiment, was posted between Leignitz and Goldberg on the left bank of the little stream of the Katzbach, separated by it from several Prussian corps commanded by Field-Marshal Blucher. The ground which we occupied was cut up with wooded hillocks which, though practical for cavalry, rendered its movements difficult, and for that reason offered great advantages to infantry. Now as Macdonald's force consisted chiefly of that arm, and he had only the 6,000 force of Sébastiani's corps, while the enemy had 15,000 to 20,000 at his disposal posted on the vast level plateau of Jauer, it was obviously his duty to await the Prussians in his position. It may be added that the left bank of the Katzbach is low, while on the opposite side, in order to reach the plateau of Jauer, a lofty and rocky hill has to be climbed by means of a steep and stony road. The only bridges over the Katzbach are in front of the villages, which are few, and the fords are very narrow and become impracticable if the water rises in the least. The stream covered the front of the French army, than which nothing could have been more favourable to us, but Marshal Macdonald, wishing to attack the Prussians, abandoned the great advantage of his position and put the Katzbach behind him, ordering his troops to cross at several points. The cavalry corps, including Exelmans' division, of which my regiment formed part, had to cross the river at the ford of Chemochowitz. The weather had been threatening in the morning, and this should have led the marshal to put off his attack till another day, or at least induced him to act promptly. Instead of this he lost precious moments in giving detailed orders, so that his columns were not in motion till two in the afternoon. Scarcely had the army started when a fearful storm came on, swelling the Katzbach and rendering the ford so difficult that General Saint-Germain's cuirassiers could not cross.

On reaching the opposite bank we had to climb a steep hill through a narrow defile, where the rain had made the ground so slippery that our horses were falling at every step. We were therefore obliged to get down, only remounting when we

reached the plateau. There we found several divisions of infantry which the generals had prudently posted near the clumps of wood with which the plain is covered, for, as I have already said, we knew that the enemy was far superior to us in cavalry; and this was all the greater disadvantage to us because, as has been explained, the rain prevented the soldiers from firing. We were much surprised to see no sign of the enemy. The complete silence made me suspect some trap, since we knew for certain that on the previous night Blucher had occupied the position with more than 100,000 men. We ought, therefore, in my opinion, to have reconnoitred the country well before committing ourselves to it. General Sébastiani thought otherwise. As soon as Roussel d'Urbals' division was formed he sent it forward into the plain, not only with its own artillery, but with that of Exelmans' division which we had had so much trouble in getting on to the plateau. As soon as Exelmans perceived that Sébastiani had carried off his guns he hastened after that general to reclaim them, leaving his division without any orders. The two brigades composing it were about five hundred paces apart on the same front and drawn up in columns of regiments. Mine formed the head of Wathiez' brigade, having the 24th behind it and the 11th Hussars in the rear.

The plateau of Jauer is so extensive that we could barely see Roussel d'Urbal's division of seven regiments. A thousand paces from the right flank of my column was one of the numerous coppices with which the plain is studded. If my regiment had been alone at that point, I should certainly have searched the wood; but as Exelmans, who was very jealous of his own authority, had made it a rule than no man of his division was to leave the ranks without orders, I had not ventured to take that usual precaution, and for the same reason the brigadier had also abstained from doing so. This passive obedience went near to be fatal to us.

I was in front of my regiment—which, as I said, was leading the columns—when suddenly I heard loud shouts behind me. A large body of Prussian lancers had issued unexpectedly from the wood, and hurled themselves on the 24th Chasseurs and the lancers, taking them in flank, and throwing them into great disorder. Being directed obliquely, their charge reached the rear of our column first, then the centre, and now was threatening the head. My regiment was therefore about to be attacked on the right flank. The enemy was advancing quickly, and the position was critical; but fully confident in the courage and intelligence of all my men, I gave the order to charge first to

the right at full gallop. The manœuvre was a risky one in presence of the enemy, but it was executed so quickly and in such good order that in an instant the regiment was fronting towards the Prussians. These from their oblique movement now presented their flank to us, and our squadron took advantage of this to penetrate the enemy's ranks, doing great execution.

On seeing the success of my regiment, the 24th, recovering from its surprise, rallied and repulsed the part of the enemy's line opposed to it. As for the 11th, however—the Dutchmen whom the Emperor had thought to make Frenchmen by a stroke of the pen—their colonel could not bring them to charge. However, we could do without them, for the 23rd and 24th were enough to rout three Prussian regiments.

While our chasseurs were in hot pursuit, an old colonel on the other side, who had been unhorsed, came near to me for safety, since, even in the heat of the fight, no one dared to strike him while he was under my protection. On foot, and over a soil washed to mud, he followed the rapid movements of my horse for a quarter of an hour, with one hand on my knee, saying: 'You are my guardian angel.' I was really sorry for the old man, for he was dropping from fatigue and yet would not leave me, till presently, seeing one of my men leading a captured horse, I made him lend it to the Prussian colonel, whom I sent to the rear with a sergeant. You will see that he lost no time in showing his gratitude.

Meanwhile, the plateau of Jauer and the banks of the Katzbach had suddenly become the scene of a bloody battle, for Prussian troops were emerging from every coppice and the plain was soon covered with them. I could not check my regiment, and we presently found ourselves in front of a brigade of the enemy's infantry, who, owing to the effects of the rain on their muskets, were unable to fire a shot at us. I tried to break the square, but our horses could only advance at a walk, and everyone knows that without a dash it is impossible for cavalry to break a well-commanded and well-closed-up battalion which boldly presents a hedge of bayonets. In vain did we approach so close to the enemy that we could talk to them and strike their muskets with our sword-blades; we could not break their lines, as we could easily have done if General Sébastiani had not sent the artillery to another point. The position on both sides was truly ridiculous; we looked each other in the eyes, unable to do any damage, our swords being too short to reach the enemy, and their muskets refusing to go off. Things went on like this for some time till General Maurin sent the 6th Lancers to our

aid. Their long weapons, outreaching the enemy's bayonets, soon slew many of the Prussians, enabling the chasseurs to penetrate into the square, where they did terrible execution. In this fight the sonorous voice of Colonel Perquit could be heard shouting, in a rich Alsatian accent, '*Bointez*, *lanciers*, *bointez*.'

In this part of the field, then, the fight was going in our favour; but things were altered by the arrival of 20,000 Prussian cavalry, who, having crushed Roussel d'Urbal's division, sent unsupported more than a league ahead, attacked us with overpowering forces. Their approach was notified to us by the return of General Exelmans, who, as I said, had left his division and gone off almost alone to get back from Sébastiani his guns, which that general had unwisely attached to Roussel d'Urbal's division. He had not found Sébastiani, but had reached the first division in time to see his guns captured, together with D'Urbal's own, and to find himself caught in the rout of his colleague's squadrons. We felt a presentiment of disaster on seeing our general hurry up with changed countenance, and having lost his hat, and even his belt. In haste we halted our soldiers, who were engaged in sabring the enemy's infantry; but before we could re-form them we were enveloped by the Prussian squadron, who pursued the remains of D'Urbal's division right into our ranks.

In an instant the 5,000 or 6,000 combatants of Sébastiani's corps were overwhelmed by 20,000 troopers, nearly all uhlans, and therefore armed with a lance, a weapon which only a few squadrons of ours carried. The groups which we formed were thus, in spite of all our efforts, constantly broken up, and the enemy pushed us steadily back to the end of the plain, where the steep descent to the Katzbach begins.

At this point we were received by two divisions of French infantry, in rear of which we hoped to rally; but our men's muskets were also too wet to be fired. Their only means of defence was a battery of six pieces, with which and their bayonets they checked the enemy for a moment; but the Prussian generals brought up twenty pieces, the French guns were dismounted in an instant, and their battalions broken. Then, with one general *hurrah*, the enemy's troopers hurled us down in disorder to the Katzbach. The stream, which we had crossed in the morning with difficulty, had been transformed by the deluge of rain which had fallen all day long into a raging torrent. The water had overflowed, covering almost entirely the parapet of the Chemochowitz bridge, and preventing us from ascertaining if the ford were still passable. People made,

however, for the points where they had crossed in the morning; the ford was impracticable for men on foot, and many were drowned, but the greater number escaped by the bridge.

I got my regiment as much as possible together, making them march in close column of half-sections, so as to give mutual support. They entered the water, and reached the other side with the loss of two men only. All the other cavalry regiments took the same line, comprehending, even in the confusion of the retreat, that the bridges must be left for the infantry. I must admit that the descent of the hill was one of the most critical moments of my life. The steep ground slipped under our horses' feet, and at every step they stumbled over fragments of rock. The enemy's artillery, belching grape upon us, completed the horror of our situation. Still I got off with no accident, thanks to the pluck and cleverness of my Turkish horse. He went along the precipice like a cat on a roof, and saved my life, not for the only time. I shall have more to say about this excellent beast.

After crossing the Katzbach our troops expected to be safe from the enemy; but the Prussians had sent a strong column across the river by a bridge above that of Chemochowitz, so that when we reached the bank which we had left in the morning we were astonished to find ourselves attacked by numerous squadrons of uhlans. Yet several regiments—mine was mentioned by Marshal Macdonald in his despatch—went at the enemy without hesitation. I do not know, however, what would have happened if General Saint-Germain's division, which had been left behind in the morning and consequently was quite fresh, had not been on the spot to come to our succour. This division, consisting of two regiments of carabineers, a brigade of cuirassiers, and six guns, attacked the enemy furiously, and drove the troops who had come to cut off our retreat into the river. Then, as nothing is so terrible as beaten troops who resume the offensive, the troopers of Exelmans' and Roussel d'Urbal's divisions annihilated all whom they could get at.

This counter-attack was of great service to us, for it checked the enemy, who, on that day, did not venture to pursue us beyond the Katzbach. But the disaster to the French army was immense, for, having crossed the stream by all the fords and bridges between Liegnitz and Goldberg—that is to say, over a distance of more than five leagues—now that those passages were all rendered useless by the floods the French army found itself extended on a long front, with the Prussians in its rear and an almost impassable stream in its front. The scenes which

I had witnessed on the plateau of Jauer, and at the bridge of Chemochowitz were reproduced at all points of the battlefield. Everywhere the rain paralysed our infantry fire and favoured the Prussian cavalry, out-numbering us fourfold. Everywhere was our retreat rendered very dangerous by the difficulty of crossing the swollen Katzbach. Most of those who tried to swim the river were drowned, General Sibuet among the number, and we saved only a few guns.

After this disastrous affair, Marshal Macdonald tried to rally his troops on the towns of Bunzlau, Lauban, and Görlitz. A pitch-dark night, roads cut up, rain always falling in torrents, rendered our march slow and toilsome; many men fell out or went astray.

At the battle of the Katzbach, Napoleon's army lost 13,000 men killed or drowned, 20,000 prisoners, and 50 guns. Marshal Macdonald, whose miscalculation from a strategic point of view had brought about this irreparable disaster, though he had lost the confidence of the army, was able to preserve its esteem by the honest and straightforward way in which he admitted his mistake. On the following day he called a meeting of all the generals and colonels, and after inviting us all to help to maintain order, said that every man and officer had done his duty, that the loss of the battle was due to one man only, and that was himself, because when it came on to rain he ought not to have left broken ground to go and attack in an open plain an enemy out-numbering him immensely in cavalry, nor should he have placed a river behind him in stormy weather. This noble confession disarmed criticism, and each man did his utmost to contribute to the safety of the army during its retreat to the Elbe.

Fate seemed determined to overwhelm us, for a few days after Oudinot had lost the battle of Gross-Beeren, Macdonald that of Katzbach, and Vandamme that of Kulm, the French experienced a serious reverse. Marshal Ney, who had succeeded Oudinot in command of the army which was to march on Berlin, was beaten at Jutterbach by the deserter Bernadotte, and compelled to abandon the right bank of the Elbe. The Emperor returned to Dresden, and the various corps under Macdonald took up a position not far from the town, while Marshal Ney, after driving back the Swedes to the right bank, assembled his troops on the left, at Dessau and Wittenberg. The French army remained almost motionless for about a fortnight in September and the beginning of October. My regiment bivouacked near Weissig on the heights of Pilnitz, these being occupied by one of our divisions of infantry. There was no official armistice, but

both sides were tired and hostilities were *de facto* suspended, each side benefiting by this to prepare for new and more terrible combats.

At Pilnitz I received a letter from the colonel of Prussian cavalry to whom I had lent a horse when taken prisoner by my troopers at the beginning of the battle of Katzbach. He had been set free by his own side when the tide of fortune turned, but was none the less grateful for what I had done for him. In order to prove it he sent me ten troopers and a lieutenant of my regiment, who had been wounded and taken prisoners. Herr von Blankensee, for that was his name, had had their wounds dressed, and, after taking every care of them for a fortnight, had obtained leave to have them escorted to the French outposts, and forwarded them to me with many thanks, assuring me that he owed me his life. I believe he was right, but I felt none the less this expression of gratitude from one of the enemy's commanding officers.

While we were encamped at Pilnitz, a curious thing took place in the sight of the whole division. A corporal of the 4th Chasseurs had in a drunken moment insulted his lieutenant, and a lancer of the 6th, being savagely bitten by his horse and unable to make it let go, had struck it in the belly with a pair of shears, thereby killing it. Both men certainly deserved punishment, but only as a disciplinary measure. General Exelmans by his own authority condemned them to death, and having made the division mount to be present at the execution, he drew them up on three sides of a large hollow square, two pits being dug on the fourth side, and the criminals placed in front of them. I had been riding about all night, and returned to camp at that moment. On seeing the melancholy preparations I had made sure that the offenders had been duly tried. I soon found out that it was not so; and on going up to a group formed by General Exelmans, the two brigadiers, and all the colonels, I heard M. Devance, of the 4th Chasseurs, and M. Perquit, of the 6th Lancers, entreating the general to pardon the two offenders. Exelmans refused; walking up and down in front of the troops while they were begging for clemency. I have never been able to refrain from expressing my indignation at the sight of an act which seemed to me unjust. I may have been wrong, but addressing Colonels Devance and Perquit, I told them that they were lowering their dignity by permitting men of their regiments to be marched through the camp as criminals without having been tried. I added, 'The Emperor has granted power of life and death to no one, and has reserved

that of pardoning to himself.' On seeing the effect produced by my outbreak, General Exelmans was moved, and called out that he forgave the chasseur, but that the lancer would be shot. That is to say, he pardoned the soldier who had insulted his lieutenant, and meant to execute the man who had killed a horse.

To put the poor fellow to death, two sergeants were called for from each regiment; but as sergeants have no carbines, they had to take those belonging to some of the men. When the order reached me I made no answer to my adjutant, so no man of the 23rd presented himself to take part in the execution. General Exelmans perceived it and said nothing. A report rang out, and all the spectators groaned with indignation. Exelmans ordered that, according to custom, the troops should file past the corpse; the march began. My regiment was second in the column, and I was just debating whether I ought to make it pass the body of the unhappy victim of Exelmans' severity when shouts of laughter were heard proceeding from the 24th Chasseurs, who had already reached the place of execution. I sent a staff-sergeant to find out the cause of this indecent mirth in presence of a corpse, and I soon learned that the dead man was doing very well. In fact all that had taken place was merely a farce invented to frighten any soldiers who might be tempted to fail in their discipline—a farce which consisted in shooting a man with blank cartridges. In order that the secret of this sham execution should be better kept, our chief had entrusted the duty to sergeants and had had cartridges containing only powder served out to them; but as in order to complete the illusion it was necessary that the troops should see the corpse, Exelmans had told the lancer to fall face forwards as soon as they fired, to sham dead, and to leave the army the next night in peasant's clothes, and with a little money given to him on purpose. But the soldier, a crafty Gascon, knew quite well that Exelmans was exceeding his powers, and had no more right to shoot him without trial than to send him away without leave. So he remained standing after the discharge, and refused to go away unless he was given a passport, and guaranteed against arrest by the gendarmes. On learning that it was this discussion between the general and the supposed dead man which had excited the merriment of the 24th, I did not choose that my regiment should take part in this comedy, which in my view was far more contrary to discipline than were the faults it was intended to check. So I made my squadrons wheel, and trotting off, I brought them away from this unpleasant scene back to their camp, where I made them dismount.

All the generals and colonels having followed this example, Exelmans remained alone with the dead man, who calmly took his way back to his bivouac, where he at once set to work to eat his soup with his comrades amid renewed peals of laughter.

During our stay at Pilnitz, the enemy was receiving strong reinforcements, notably 60,000 Russians under Benningsen. These came from beyond Moscow, and included many Tartars and Bashkirs, armed only with bows and arrows. I have never understood with what object the Russian Government brought up from so great a distance these masses of irregular cavalry, who could be of no use against troops armed in the modern fashion, and only made food more scarce for the regular troops. Our soldiers were in no way impressed by the sight of these half-savage Asiatics, whom, from their bows and arrows, they nicknamed 'the Cupids.' The new-comers, however, who had never seen Frenchmen, encouraged by officers nearly as ignorant as themselves, expected to see us fly at their approach. The very day after their arrival they assailed our troops in countless bands, but were received with musketry fire, and left many of their number dead on the ground. Their losses seemed only to excite them further; and as any ground suited them they began wheeling round us like swarms of wasps, and it was hard to catch them. When our troopers did get at them, the execution was considerable. Still, as the Russians took advantage of the disorder into which they threw our line to support them by detachments of hussars, the Emperor ordered the generals to keep a redoubled watch and to visit the outposts frequently.

Meanwhile, both sides were preparing to resume the hostilities which, as I have said, had been unofficially suspended. One morning, when our camp was perfectly quiet, just as I was in my shirt-sleeves, preparing to shave myself before a little mirror hung to a tree, I felt a tap on the shoulder. Looking round sharply to see who in my regiment had taken this liberty with his colonel, I beheld the Emperor. He had wished to examine the neighbouring position without alarming the enemy, and had gone the rounds with a single aide-de-camp, followed by some squadrons selected from all the regiments in the division. By his order, I took command of this escort, and went about all day with him; nor had I any fault to find with him in the matter of kindness to me. As we were about to return to Pilnitz, we perceived some thousand Bashkirs galloping towards us at the full speed of their little Tartar horses. The Emperor had not seen them

till now, and reined up on a rising ground, asking me to try and capture some. To this end, I placed two of my squadrons in ambush behind a clump of trees, bidding the rest march on. This trick would not have taken in Cossacks; but with the less experienced Bashkirs it answered perfectly. They passed close to the wood, and were pursuing the column when our squadrons dashed out, killing a good many, and capturing some thirty of them. I had them brought to the Emperor, who exhibited much surprise at seeing these wretched horsemen sent with only bows and arrows to fight European troops. These Tartars had Chinese faces, and wore strange dresses. When we got back to camp my men amused themselves by giving the Bashkirs wine. Charmed with this unwonted reception, they all got drunk, and expressed their satisfaction by such wonderful grimaces and capers that Homeric laughter, in which Napoleon shared, overcame all beholders.

On September 28 the Emperor reviewed our corps, and gave me proofs of exceptional favour; for, contrary to his usual practice of giving only one reward at a time, he made me officer of the Legion of Honour and Baron, and granted me a gratuity. Further, he heaped honours on my regiment, saying that it was the only one in Sébastiani's corps which had maintained good order at the Katzbach, had captured guns, and beaten the Prussians wherever it met them. The regiment owed this distinction to Marshal Macdonald's eulogy of it; at the time of the rout at the Katzbach he had taken refuge in its ranks, and shared in the firm charge by which it had driven the enemy back across the river. After the review, as the troops were on their way back to camp, General Exelmans passed along the front of my regiment, loudly complimenting it on the justice which the Emperor had done to its valour, and eulogising the merits of its colonel in a way which I can only call exaggerated.

Meanwhile, the French army was concentrating in the neighbourhood of Leipzig. The enemy was also marching on that town in a vast circle which contracted day by day; with the evident object of shutting up the French troops, and wholly cutting off their retreat.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

On October 14 a brisk cavalry engagement took place between our advance-guard and that of the Russians and Austrians, without decisive result; ending in that most absurd of warlike operations, a cannonade going on till nightfall, with no effect beyond the destruction of a good many men. Early next morning the Emperor reached Leipzig, leaving 20,000 men at Dresden under Saint-Cyr.

The exact facts about the battle of Leipzig will never be known. The fighting, which lasted several days, took place on a vast and complicated field, and the immense number of troops which took part in it belonged to different nations. It is on the French side that documents are chiefly lacking; so many commanders of army corps and divisions, as well as staff-officers, fell in the battle or were taken prisoners that their reports were never completed, and those which came to hand showed the hurry and disorder amid which they had been drawn up. In my own case, being colonel of a regiment, and compelled to follow all the movements of my division, I could not know what others were doing, as in the days when I was an aide-de-camp, and by carrying orders to different parts of the field was enabled to know something of the general plan of operations. I must therefore more than ever abridge my story, and confine myself to what is absolutely necessary in order to give a notion of the most important events which so powerfully influenced the destinies of Napoleon, France, and all Europe.

The ring of steel in which the enemy was preparing to enclose the French army was not yet completed round Leipzig, when the King of Wurtemberg thought it his duty to warn Napoleon that all Germany was, at the instigation of the English, about to rise against him; and that as the troops of the Confederation would shortly desert him he would not have more than time to retire behind the Main. He added that he himself would be unable to avoid following their example, for he must at length yield to the pressure of his subjects and follow the torrent of public feeling in Germany.

Strongly affected by the advice of the ablest and most loyal of his allies, the Emperor had, it is said, the idea of retreating towards the hilly district of Thüringen and Hesse, and, covered by the Saale, allowing the Coalition to attack him in a difficult country. Had this plan been carried out, it might have saved Napoleon; but for that prompt action was needed before the enemy's armies were wholly joined and near enough to attack us on the retreat. The Emperor, however, could not make up his mind to abandon any part of his conquests, nor yet to let it be believed that he considered himself beaten. The great captain's excess of courage was our ruin: he overlooked the fact that his army, weakened by its heavy losses, numbered among its ranks many strangers who were only waiting the opportunity to betray him, and that in the broad plains of Leipzig he ran every chance of being overwhelmed by numbers. If, on the other hand, he had assumed a defensive position in the mountains, the approach of winter and the need of feeding their numerous forces would soon have compelled the enemy to break up, while the French army, protected in front and on the flanks by the natural difficulties of the country, would have had the fertile valleys of the Rhine and Neckar in its rear. At the very least, we should have gained time, and perhaps wearied out the allies till they desired peace. But Napoleon's confidence in himself and in his troops prevailed, and he decided to accept battle in the plains of Leipzig.

Hardly had this fatal decision been taken when a second letter came from the King of Wurtemberg, with the news that the King of Bavaria had come to terms with the Coalition, and that the united Austrian and Bavarian armies, under General von Wrede, were marching on the Rhine. With much regret Wurtemberg had been compelled by the strength of this army to unite here with it; and the Emperor might therefore expect that before long 100,000 men would be investing Mainz and threatening the French frontier.

This unforeseen news led Napoleon to think that he had better return to his plan of retiring behind the Saale; but it was too late. The main force of the allies was by this time in presence of the French army, and too near for retreat to be possible without being attacked during the operation. He therefore determined to fight, though his whole force, French and allied, amounted only to 157,000 men, including 29,000 cavalry, while Schwarzenberg could dispose of 350,000 Russians, Austrians, Prussians, and Swedes, his cavalry being 54,000.

The town of Leipzig, one of the busiest and wealthiest in

Germany, stands near the middle of the vast plain which extends from the Elbe to the Harz Mountains. The situation of this district has made it the principal theatre of war in Germany. The small stream of the Elster, almost insignificant enough to be called a brook, flows from south to north through a shallow valley amid marshy meadows. Being divided into many branches, it offers a serious obstacle to the operations of war, and requires a great many bridges for communication among the villages. The Pleisse, a still smaller stream than the Elster, flows about a league and a half from it, and joins it under the walls of Leipzig, while north of the town the Partha flows into it. Being thus at the confluence of these three streams, and almost surrounded on the north and west by their many arms, Leipzig is the key of the position. The town, which at that time was not very extensive, was surrounded by an old wall having four large and three small gates. The road to Lutzen, by Lindenau, formed the only communication open to the rear of the French army. It was on that part of the ground between the Pleisse and the Partha that the hardest fighting took place. A noticeable point is the Kolmberg, known as the Swedish redoubt, because in the Thirty Years' War Gustavus Adolphus had raised fortifications at that point.

The battle of Leipzig began on November 16, 1813, and lasted three days. Without going into the details of this memorable action, I think I ought to specify the principal positions occupied by the French army, which will also give a general idea of those of the enemy. Murat commanded our right wing, the extremity of which rested on the Pleisse, near the villages of Connewitz, Dölitz, and Mark-Kleeberg, which were occupied by Prince Poniatowsky and his Poles. Next to these, behind the village of Wachau, was Marshal Victor; Augereau's troops occupied Dosen. These corps of infantry were supported by cavalry under Kellermann and Michaud. The centre, under the immediate command of the Emperor, was at Liebertvolkwitz. It consisted of Lauriston's and Macdonald's corps of infantry with the cavalry of Latour-Maubourg and Sébastiani; my regiment, forming part of the latter general's corps, was posted facing the Kolmberg. The left wing, under Marshal Ney, was formed of Marmont's, Reynier's, and Souham's corps, supported by the Duke of Padua's cavalry. It occupied Taucha, Plaussig, and the banks of the Partha. A corps of observation, 15,000 strong, under General Bertrand, was sent to the further side of Leipzig to hold Lindenau and the road to Lutzen. At Probstheida, in rear of the centre, was

the reserve, under Oudinot, consisting of the Old and Young Guard, and Nansouty's cavalry. The King of Saxony remained in the town of Leipzig with his own guard and a few French regiments.

During the night of the 15th, Marshal Macdonald had made a movement to concentrate on Liebertvolkwitz, but as it was not wished to let the Kolmberg fall into the enemy's hands before morning I was ordered to watch it till daybreak. It was a ticklish duty, since it involved advancing with my regiment to the foot of the hill while the army retired half a league in the opposite direction. I ran the risk of being surrounded and carried off with my whole regiment by the enemy's advance-guard. Their scouts could not fail to ascend the hill as soon as the first light of dawn should permit them to see what was going on in the plain. It was splendid weather, and one could see very well by the starlight; but as in such a case one can much more easily perceive from below men coming on to high ground than those above can see those below, I brought my squadrons as near as possible to the hill, and, after ordering perfect silence and stillness, awaited events. Chance very nearly produced one which would have been very fortunate for France and for the Emperor, and would have made me for ever famous. It happened thus.

Half an hour before the first light of dawn, three horsemen, coming from the enemy's side, slowly ascended the Kolmberg. They could not see us, while we plainly made out their outlines and heard their conversation. They were talking French; one was a Russian, the other two Prussians. The first, who appeared to be in authority, told one of the others to let *their majesties* know that there were no French at that point, and that they could come up, for in a few minutes all the plain would be visible, but that they must make the most of the time lest the French should send skirmishers in that direction. The officer to whom these words were addressed remarked that the escorts were still some way off. 'What matter?' was the answer, 'since there is no one but us here.' At this my troops and I redoubled our attention, and soon perceived on the top of the hill a score of officers, one of whom dismounted.

Although I certainly had had no expectation of capturing a great prize, I had warned my officers that if we saw any of the enemy on the Swedish redoubt, two squadrons should, at a signal which I would give with my handkerchief, work round the hill to the right and left, so as to cut off anyone who should have ventured so near to our army. I was, therefore, very

hopeful, but just then the over-eagerness of one of my troopers wrecked my plan. The man, having accidentally let his sword drop, instantly took his carbine, and, fearing to be left behind when I gave the signal for attack, fired into the group and killed a Prussian major. As you may suppose, in the twinkling of an eye all the enemy's officers, having no escort but a few orderlies, and seeing themselves on the point of being surrounded by us, galloped away. Our people could not follow them far for fear of themselves falling into the hands of the escort, whom we could hear coming up. My men, however, captured two officers, from whom we could get no information, but afterwards I learnt from my friend, Baron von Stoch, that the Emperor Alexander of Russia and the King of Prussia were among the officers who had so nearly fallen into the hands of the French near the Swedish redoubt. If this had happened the destinies of Europe would have been changed. As, however, luck had decided otherwise, there was nothing left for me but to withdraw quickly towards the French army.

On October 16, at eight in the morning, the allied batteries gave the signal for attack. A brisk cannonade opened along all the line, and the allied army marched on us at all points. The action began on our right, where the Poles were driven back by the Prussians and abandoned the village of Mark-Kleeberg. On our centre, the Russians and Austrians six times attacked Wachau and Liebertvolkwitz, and each time were beaten with heavy loss. The Emperor, doubtless regretting the abandonment of the Swedish redoubt, whence the enemy was pouring a hail of grape upon us, gave orders to recapture the hill, which was promptly effected by the 22nd light infantry supported by my regiment.

After this success, the Emperor, being unable to produce any impression on the enemy's wing owing to the great extent of their front, resolved merely to keep them employed while he endeavoured to pierce their centre. To this end he sent Mortier with two divisions of infantry, and Oudinot with the Young Guard, towards Wachau, Drouot supporting the attack, which to some extent succeeded, with sixty guns.

On his side, Marshal Victor routed the Russian corps under Prince Eugene of Wurtemberg; but the latter rallied his troops at Jossa. At the same moment Lauriston and Macdonald debouched from Liebertvolkwitz, the enemy was put to flight, and the French took possession of the wood of Gross Possna.[1] In

[1] [Called the 'University Wood.']

vain did the Austrian cavalry under Klenau, supported by a 'pulk' of Cossacks, endeavour to restore the fight; it was charged and thrown into disorder by Sébastiani's corps, after desperate fighting, in which my regiment took part. I lost some men, and my senior major, M. Pozac, was wounded by a lance in the breast, in consequence of having omitted to adopt the customary protection of his rolled-up cloak.

Meanwhile, Prince Schwarzenberg, seeing his line badly shaken, brought up his reserves, upon which the Emperor determined to order a grand cavalry charge. Kellermann, Latour-Maubourg, and the dragoons of the guard took part in this, and the first overthrew a division of Russian cuirassiers, but, being taken in flank by another division, he had to retire to the high ground near Wachau, after capturing several stand of colours. Then Murat brought up the French infantry, and fresh fighting took place. The Prince of Wurtemberg's corps was broken again, and lost twenty-six guns. After this rough handling, the enemy's centre began to bend, and was on the point of being pierced, but the Emperor of Russia quickly brought up the cavalry of his guard, and they, catching Latour-Maubourg's squadrons in the disorder which always results from a charge pushed home, drove them back in their turn, and recaptured twenty-four of the guns. In this charge General Latour-Maubourg had his leg shot off.

As neither side had so far gained any marked advantages, Napoleon, by way of a decisive stroke, launched on the enemy's centre his reserve, composed of all the Old Guard and a corps of fresh troops from Leipzig. But at that moment a regiment of the enemy's cavalry, which had made its way by design or accident to the rear of the French, caused some uneasiness among our troops. They halted and formed square to avoid a surprise, and before the cause of the alarm could be discovered night came on, and suspended operations at that point.

On our extreme right, General Merfeldt had during the whole day been vainly trying to get possession of the passage over the Pleisse, which Poniatowski's Poles defended. Towards evening, however, he succeeded in making himself master of the village of Dölitz, thus putting our right wing in danger. But the chasseurs of the Old Guard, under General Curial, came up at the double, hurled the Austrians back over the river, taking several hundred prisoners, General Merfeldt himself falling, for the third time in his life, into the hands of the French. Although the Poles had allowed Dölitz to be taken from them, the Emperor thought it well, in order to inspirit

them, to give a marshal's baton to their chief, Prince Poniatowski: he did not long enjoy the honour of bearing it.

On the other side of the Elster the Austrian general, Gyulai, had carried the village of Lindenau after seven hours' hard fighting. On hearing of this serious event, which endangered the retreat of the greater part of his troops, the Emperor ordered General Bertrand to attack Lindenau, and the position was recaptured with the bayonet.

On our left Ney's impatience nearly brought about a great disaster. That marshal, who was commanding the left wing posted according to the Emperor's orders, finding that by ten o'clock no troops were to be seen in front of him, of his own accord sent one of his army corps under General Souham to Wachau, where the fighting appeared to be hot. But during this ill-judged movement Marshal Blucher, who had been delayed, came up with the Army of Silesia, and captured the village of Möckern. Thereupon Ney was obliged, owing to the reduction of his force, to retire towards evening within the walls of Leipzig, and to confine himself to defending the suburb of Halle. In this engagement the French lost heavily, and a bad effect was produced on those of our men who in other parts of the field could hear the firing in their rear. Towards eight in the evening all firing ceased on both sides and the night was quiet.

This first day left victory undecided, but still it was in favour of the French, since, with forces far inferior, they had not only made headway against the Coalition, but had driven them from some of the positions which they had occupied the day before. On both sides preparations were made to renew the combat next morning, but, contrary to expectation, the 17th passed without any hostile movement taking place. The allies were awaiting the arrival of the Russian army from Poland, and also the troops which Bernadotte, the Crown Prince of Sweden, was bringing up. Napoleon, on his side, regretted that he had rejected the proposals for peace made two months ago, but hoped for some result from a pacific message which he had sent the night before to the allied sovereigns by his prisoner, the Austrian general, Count Merfeldt. The sequence of events is sometimes very strange; this Count Merfeldt was the same man who, sixteen years before, had come to General Bonaparte, then commanding the Army of Italy, to sue for the famous armistice of Leoben. It was he who had brought back to Vienna the treaty of peace concluded between the Austrian Government and the Directory, represented by General Bonaparte. It was he who, during the night after the battle of

Austerlitz, had carried from the Emperor of Austria to the Emperor of the French proposals for an armistice; and now that General Merfeldt's destiny brought him once more to Napoleon at the moment when Napoleon needed an armistice and a peace, there seemed an encouraging hope that the same emissary would again bring about the desired result. But things had advanced too far for the allied sovereigns to treat with Napoleon; the mere fact of his proposing it showed that he was in difficulties. Thus, although they had not been able to beat us on the 16th, they had still a hope of overwhelming us by a renewed effort with greater forces. They reckoned also on the defection of the German troops which were still among us, whose chiefs, all members of the Tugendbund, took advantage of the quasi-armistice of the 17th to agree upon the manner in which they should carry out their notable treachery. No reply was ever given to the message brought by Count Merfeldt.

Early on the 18th the army of the Coalition opened the attack. The 2nd cavalry corps, to which my regiment belonged, was posted as before between Liebertvolkwitz and Kolmberg. The fighting was hottest towards our centre, where the village of Probstheida was attacked simultaneously by a Russian and a Prussian force. Both were repulsed with heavy loss. But the combat went on at all points, and the Russians attacked Holzhausen, which Macdonald successfully defended. Towards eleven o'clock firing was heard beyond Leipzig, in the direction of Lindenau; and we heard that our troops had at that point broken the circle in which the enemy flattered himself that he had shut up the French army, and that General Bertrand was making his way in the direction of the Rhine. The Emperor then gave orders that the baggage should be withdrawn towards Lutzen.

Meantime the plain was the scene of a fierce engagement about Connewitz and Lössnig; and the earth shook with the thunder of a thousand guns. The enemy tried to force the passage of the Pleisse, but were repulsed, though the Poles spoilt some of our finest cavalry charges. Then the first cavalry corps, seeing the Austrian and Prussian squadrons coming up to the aid of their allies, issued from behind Probstheida, broke the enemy and drove them back on their reserves, which were commanded by the Grand Duke Constantine. The allies at once brought up immense forces and tried to carry Probstheida, but the formidable masses were so well received by our infantry that they promptly recoiled. At this point we lost Generals Vial and Rochambeau; the latter had just been created marshal by the Emperor.

Up to this time Bernadotte had not fought against the

French, and was said to be wavering. But at length, under the exhortations and even threats of Marshal Blucher, he decided to cross the Partha above the village of Mockau with his Swedes and one Russian corps.[1] A brigade of Saxon hussars and lancers was posted at this point, and, on seeing Bernadotte's leading Cossacks approach, made as though to charge them; but they suddenly wheeled round, and forgetting the risk to which they were exposing their King, who was still in the midst of Napoleon's army, these scoundrelly Saxons turned their muskets and cannons against the French.

The head of Bernadotte's army marched along the left bank of the Partha towards Sellershausen, which Reynier was defending. That general, whose troops were almost entirely drawn from the German contingents, after witnessing the desertion of the Saxon cavalry had lost confidence in the infantry of the same nation and placed Durutte's cavalry near them to keep them in hand. But Ney, with over-confidence, bade him deploy the Saxons, and send them in support of a French regiment which was holding the village of Paunsdorf. Hardly, however, had the Saxons got away from the French troops, when, seeing the Prussian standards near Paunsdorf, they made off at full speed in that direction, led by General Russel, their unworthy chief. Some French officers, unable to imagine such treachery, thought that the Saxons were going to attack the Prussians, so that General Gressot, Reynier's chief of staff, actually hurried off to check what he took for over-eagerness; but he found that he had none but enemies before him. This desertion of an entire army corps not only produced an alarming gap in the French line, but rekindled the ardour of the allied forces, and the Wurtemberg cavalry instantly followed the example of the Saxons. Bernadotte welcomed the traitors into his ranks, called upon their artillery to assist his; and even begged the English commissioner to lend him the battery of Congreve rockets which he had brought. These the former marshal of France directed upon the French.

No sooner was the Saxon corps in the ranks of the enemy than it notified its treachery by a volley from all its guns—the commander exclaiming that he had burnt half his ammunition for the French, and would now fire the rest at them! There-

[1] [The Count of Rochechouart gives a most picturesque description of his mission to Bernadotte, who, in the month of September, was still hesitating to pass the Elbe; and similarly describes his meeting on the battlefield of Leipzig with the Crown Prince of Sweden, 'superb in the thickest of the fire, with dead and wounded all round him.']

with he launched a hail of projectiles at us, of which my regiment received a large share. I lost some thirty men, including Captain Bertin, a most deserving officer, whose head was taken off by a round-shot. And it was Bernadotte, a Frenchman, for whom the blood of Frenchmen had earned a crown, that gave us this finishing stroke!

Among this general disloyalty the King of Wurtemberg formed an honourable exception. As I have said, he warned Napoleon that circumstances would force him to leave his cause; but even after taking this supreme decision, he carried it out with perfect loyalty, ordering his troops to take no action against the French without giving them ten days' notice. Even when he had become our enemy, he expelled from his army the general and several of the officers who had taken their troops over into the Russian ranks during the battle of Leipzig, and deprived the deserting regiments of all their decorations.

Meanwhile Probstheida continued to be the scene of a murderous struggle. The Old Guard was deployed in rear of the village, ready to aid its defenders. Bulow's corps, trying to advance, was crushed, but we lost General Delmas, a distinguished soldier and honourable man, who had fallen out with Napoleon at the creation of the Empire and lived ten years in retirement, but demanded to serve when his country was in danger. The French were maintaining their position all along the line. On the left, where Macdonald and Sébastiani had held their ground between Probstheida and Stotteritz in the teeth of frequent attacks from Klenau's Austrians and Doctoroff's Russians, we were suddenly assailed by a charge of more than 20,000 Cossacks and Bashkirs. Their efforts were chiefly directed against Sébastiani's cavalry, and in a moment the barbarians surrounded our squadrons with loud shouts, letting off thousands of arrows. The loss these caused was slight, for the Bashkirs are totally undrilled and have no more notion of any formation than a flock of sheep. Thus they cannot shoot horizontally in front of them without hitting their own comrades, and are obliged to fire their arrows parabolically into the air, with more or less elevation according to the distance at which they judge the enemy to be. As this method does not allow of accurate aiming, nine-tenths of the arrows are lost, while the few that hit are pretty well spent, and only fall with the force of their own weight, which is inconsiderable; so that the wounds they cause are usually trifling. As they have no other weapons, they are certainly the least dangerous troops

in the world. However, as they were coming up in myriads, and the more of these wasps one killed the more came on, the vast number of arrows with which they filled the air were bound sooner or later to inflict some severe wounds. Thus one of my non-commissioned officers, named Meslin, was pierced from breast to back by an arrow. Seizing it in both hands he broke it and drew the two portions from his body, but died a few minutes later. I fancy this was the only case of death caused by the Bashkirs' arrows: but I had several men and horses hit, and was myself wounded by the ridiculous weapon. I had my sword in my hand, and was giving orders to an officer. As I raised my arm to indicate the direction in which he was to go, I felt my sword unexpectedly checked, and perceived a slight pain in the right thigh. Looking down I saw that an arrow four feet long was sticking an inch deep in my right thigh, though in the excitement of the fight I had not perceived the wound. I got Dr. Parot to take it out and place it in the regimental ambulance, for I wished to preserve it as a curious relic; but I am sorry to say it has been mislaid. As you may suppose, I did not leave my regiment for so slight a wound; and, indeed, the moment was very critical. The reinforcements brought up by Bernadotte and Blucher were attacking the suburb of Schönfeld, not far from the point where the Partha enters the town of Leipzig. Generals Lagrange and Friederichs repulsed seven assaults on this important point, driving the allies from the houses which they carried. General Friederichs was killed in the combat; he was an excellent and brave officer, and had the further advantage of being the handsomest man in the French army. The enemy would, however, have probably captured Schönfeld, had not Marshal Ney flown to the support of that village. He himself received a contusion in the shoulder, which compelled him to leave the field.

When night fell, the two armies were over most part of their lines in the same position as when the battle began. That evening my troopers, and indeed all Sébastiani's corps, tethered their horses to the same pickets which they had used for the three previous days, and most of the battalions occupied the same bivouacs. Thus this battle, so vaunted as a victory by our enemies, was indecisive. We were inferior in numbers, with nearly all the nations of Europe against us and a crowd of traitors in our ranks, and yet did not lose an inch of ground. The English general, Sir Robert Wilson, who was present at Leipzig as British commissioner and whose evidence cannot be suspected of partiality, says: 'In spite of the defection of the

Saxon army in the middle of the battle, in spite of the ardent and persevering courage of the allied troops, they could not carry a single one of the villages which the French proposed to hold as vital to their position. The action was closed by night, leaving to the French, and especially to the defenders of Probstheida, the glory of having inspired a generous envy in their enemies.'

When darkness came on, I received orders to bid the useless sharpshooting, which usually follows engagements, cease along the front of my regiment. It is not easy in these cases to separate the men who have just been fighting each other, all the more so that in order to prevent the enemy knowing what is done one cannot use drums or trumpets to sound the 'cease firing' and the 'recall,' but one has to give the word in a low voice to the section leaders, and they send sergeants to take the order quietly to the outposts. On his side, the enemy does the same, and the fire gradually slackens, and soon ceases entirely.

In order to be sure that no vedette was forgotten on the ground, and that the little retreat towards the bivouac was carried out in good order, my practice was to have it seen to by an adjutant. The one on duty that evening was named Captain Joly, a capable soldier and very courageous. He had given proof of this some months before, when, being entrusted with the distribution of the remounts which the Emperor presented to such of the officers as had served in the Russian campaign, M. Joly, in spite of all that I and his friends could say, had selected for himself a splendid white horse which the rest of us had declined on account of his too conspicuous vesture, and which I had at first assigned to the trumpeters. Now on the evening of the battle of Leipzig, as M. Joly was passing at a walk behind the skirmishing line, his white horse was so plainly seen by the enemy, in spite of the darkness, that horse and man were both severely wounded. The captain was shot through the body, and died in the course of the night in a house in the suburb of Halle, where I had had Major Pozac taken the day before. His wound was not dangerous, but he was melancholy at the thought that the French army would probably retire and leave him in the hands of the enemy, who then would get possession of the sword of honour which he had received when a sergeant from the hands of the First Consul after the battle of Marengo. But I calmed his natural regrets by making myself responsible for the glorious sword. One of the surgeons of the regiment took charge of it, and it was handed back to Pozac when he returned to France.

CHAPTER LXXX.

In the calm of the night which fell on the fields of Leipzig after the terrible battle which they had witnessed, the chiefs on both sides could consider their position. Napoleon's was most unfavourable, and indeed if that great man has been blamed for not having retired behind the Saale a week before the battle, when he might still have avoided endangering the safety of his army, around which infinitely superior forces were about to form a ring of steel, it is with much greater reason that many soldiers have disapproved his dispositions when he allowed himself to be completely surrounded on the battlefield of Leipzig. I say completely, because, when Lichenstein's Austrians captured the village of Zschochern on the left bank of the Elster at 11 A.M. on the 18th, there was a moment when the road from Leipzig to Weissenfels, the only way of retreat open to the French, was intercepted, and Napoleon's army completely hemmed in. It is true this state of things only lasted half an hour, but was it prudent to expose himself to all the evils which might have resulted from it, and would it not have been better worth while, before the French army was surrounded by the united forces of the enemy, for its chief to have sheltered it behind the mountains of Thuringia?

We are now approaching a critical moment. The French had maintained their positions during the three days which the battle had lasted, but this success had only been obtained at the cost of much bloodshed, for they had had nearly 40,000 men disabled. The enemy had, it is true, lost 60,000, a difference which must be attributed to their persistency in attacking villages which we had entrenched, but as the number of their troops was infinitely greater than ours, our army was proportionately far more weakened by its losses than theirs. It must be added that as the French artillery had in the three days fired 220,000 rounds our reserves were exhausted, and we had only 16,000 rounds left—enough, that is, for two hours' fighting. This lack of ammunition, which ought to have been foreseen before engaging superior forces at a distance from our frontier, rendered Napoleon incapable of giving battle

again, and he was compelled to make up his mind to order a retreat.

It was no easy matter to carry this out. The ground which we occupied, being damp meadows with brooks between them and intersected by three streams, offered a number of small valleys, and these we had to pass close under the eyes of the enemy, who would find it easy to throw our march into disorder. There was only one way to secure our retreat: namely, the provision of a number of plank roads across the meadows, ditches, and watercourses, and of larger bridges across the three streams, especially the Elster, into which the others flow at the very gates of Leipzig. Nothing was easier to effect, since any amount of planks, beams, nails, &c., were close at hand in the town and suburbs.

The whole army was under the impression that all this had been done on its first arrival, and the work added to on the 17t when there was no fighting. But by a series of unfortunate circumstances, and by inconceivable neglect, no steps had been taken. Among the documents which are extant about the battle, there is absolutely no official statement to show that any measures had been taken, if a retreat was necessary, to facilitate the outflow of the columns from either the river valleys or the streets of Leipzig. No officer among the survivors, no author who has written on the battle, has been able to show that the chiefs of the army did anything to increase the number or the efficiency of the existing ways of communication. Only General Pelet, who pushed his admiration for Napoleon sometimes to the point of extravagance, wrote, fifteen years after the battle, that he had heard more than once from M. Odier, sub-intendant of the imperial guard, that he was present in the morning (he does not say of what day) when the Emperor gave a general on the staff orders to attend to the construction of the bridges, specially charging him with that duty. General Pelet does not mention the name of the general officer to whom the Emperor gave that order—rather an important detail. Napoleon's secretary, M. Fain, says in his Memoirs that the Emperor ordered several new passages across the marshes to be constructed in order to facilitate the crossing. How far posterity will admit the truth of these assertions, made long after date, I know not; but even supposing them accurate, many writers think that the head of the French army should not have been satisfied with 'giving orders' to a general, who, perhaps, had neither sappers nor materials at his disposal; but that several officers, at least one per

regiment in every corps, should have been charged with the duty. One thing is certain—no one carried it out. The real reason, which at the time very few people knew, was as follows.

The Emperor's chief of the head-quarters staff was Prince Berthier, who had been with him since the Italian campaign of 1796. He was a man of capacity, accuracy, and devotion to duty, but he had often felt the effects of the imperial wrath, and had acquired such a dread of Napoleon's outbreaks that he had vowed in no circumstance to take the initiative or ask any question, but to confine himself to executing orders which he received in writing. This system, while keeping the chief of the staff on good terms with his master, was injurious to the interests of the army; for great as were the Emperor's activity and talents, it was physically impossible for him to see to everything, and thus, if he overlooked any important matter, it did not get attended to.

So it seems to have been at Leipzig. Nearly all the marshals and generals commanding army corps pointed out to Berthier, over and over again, the necessity of providing many passages to secure the retreat in the event of a reverse, but he always answered: 'The Emperor has given no orders.' Nothing could be got out of him, so that when, on the night of the 18th, the Emperor gave the order to retreat on Weissenfels and the Saale, there was not a beam or a plank across a single brook.

The losses of the allies had been so great that they did not venture to attack afresh, and they were themselves on the point of withdrawing when they saw our heavy baggage being taken towards Weissenfels by way of Lindenau. Then they understood that Napoleon was preparing to retreat, and made their dispositions to profit by any chance in their favour which might result from his movement.

The most terrible moment of a retreat, especially for a commanding officer, is when he has to leave his wounded to the mercy of the enemy, who often have none, but plunder or put an end to the unhappy men who are unable to follow their comrades. However, as the worst thing of all is to be left lying on the ground, I had all my wounded taken up under cover of night and collected in two neighbouring houses, both to remove them from the first fury of the enemy, who would be flushed with wine, and to enable them to aid each other, and keep up each other's courage. M. Bordenave, assistant-surgeon, offered to remain with them. At the peace I got the Legion of Honour for that estimable doctor, by whose care many men's lives were saved.

Meanwhile, the troops were marching from that field which had witnessed their prowess and been watered by so much of their blood. The Emperor left his bivouac at 8 P.M., and took up his position in the town at the 'Prussian Arms' in the horsemarket. After giving his orders, he visited the King of Saxony, whom he found making arrangements to follow him. The King, a model friend, expected that, to punish him for his fidelity to the Emperor of the French, the allied sovereigns would deprive him of his crown, but he was most afflicted by the thought that his army had disgraced itself. Napoleon could not console the good old man, and only with difficulty persuaded him to stay at Leipzig and send one of his ministers to make terms with the Coalition. The Emperor then took leave of the King, the Queen, and their daughter. The parting was the more touching by the fact of news having come that the allies declined to enter into any engagement as to the course they meant to take with regard to the Saxon monarch. He would, therefore, be at their mercy, and in his rich provinces they had strong motives for severity.

About eight o'clock in the evening the corps of Victor and Augereau, the ambulances, part of the artillery, the cavalry, and the imperial guard began to retreat. While they were passing through Lindenau, Ney, Marmont, and Reynier guarded the suburbs of Halle and Rosenthal. Lauriston, Macdonald, and Poniatowski entered the town and established themselves behind the gates, the walls of which had battlements. Thus all was ready for an obstinate resistance by the rear-guard, and the army was free to retreat in good order. Still, Napoleon, wishing to spare the town the horrors of street fighting, had allowed the magistrates to petition the allied sovereigns for an armistice of a few hours that the evacuation might be conducted with order. This humane proposal was rejected, and the allies, in hope of profiting by any disorder which might arise in the French rear-guard, scrupled not to expose one of the largest towns in Germany to total destruction. Then, in their indignation, several generals proposed to the Emperor to secure the retreat of his army by concentrating it within the town, and setting fire to all the suburbs except that of Lindenau. I think that the refusal to allow us to retreat unmolested justified us in employing all possible means of defence, and that as fire was the most effective we should have made use of it; but Napoleon could not make up his mind to it. This excessive magnanimity lost him his crown, for the fight which I am going to relate cost us nearly as many men as the three days' battle. Indeed, it was

more disastrous, for it demoralised the army, which would otherwise have reached France in considerable strength; and the fine way in which our weak remnant opposed the allies for three months shows pretty well what we could have done if the survivors of the great battle had recrossed the Rhine without losing their arms and their organisation. France would probably have repelled the invaders.

But it was not to be so; for while Napoleon, with a too chivalrous generosity—mistaken, as I think—was refusing to burn an enemy's town and thus secure without a blow the safe retreat of his army, Bernadotte, the unworthy Crown Prince of Sweden, blaming the lack of zeal which his allies showed in the destruction of his fellow-countrymen, launched all his troops against the suburb of Taucha, captured it, and entered the town. Following his example, Blucher with his Prussians, the Russians, and the Austrians attacked the rear of the French columns in their retreat towards the Lindenau bridge over the Elster; and finally, to fill our cup full, a smart musketry fire opened near that bridge, the only way of retreat open to our troops. This fire came from the battalions of the Saxon guard who had been left in the town with their King. Regretting that they had not been able to desert with the rest of their army, and wishing to testify their German patriotism, they attacked the French in rear, before the palace of their sovereign. In vain did the unfortunate prince, appearing on the balcony, where the bullets were flying, exclaim to his officers and men, 'Cowards! kill me, your sovereign, and spare me the sight of your dishonour.' The scoundrels continued to assassinate the French, and the King, returning to his apartments, seized the colours of his guard and flung them into the fire.

The last kick was given to our troops by a Baden battalion which, being notorious for cowardice, had been left in the town during the battle to chop wood for the bakehouses. These miscreants, from the shelter of the windows of the great bakery, also fired on our soldiers, killing a great number. The French, meanwhile, made a brave resistance, defending themselves in the houses, and, in spite of their losses, disputing the ground foot by foot with the allied armies, while they retired in good order towards the bridge of Lindenau.

The Emperor had with difficulty got out of the town, and reached the suburb. At the last bridge, called the Mill-bridge, he dismounted, and not till then gave orders to charge the mine under the main bridge. Further, he sent orders to Ney, Macdonald, and Poniatowski to hold the town twenty-four hours

longer, so as to allow the artillery and baggage time to get through the suburb and across the bridges. Then he remounted; but he had hardly ridden a thousand paces along the road to Lutzen when a fearful explosion was heard. The great bridge over the Elster had blown up. And the troops under Macdonald, Lauriston, Reynier, and Poniatowski, with more than 200 guns, were still in Leipzig, and their retreat was wholly cut off. It was a climax to our disasters.

To explain this catastrophe, people said afterwards that Prussian and Swedish skirmishers had slipped along to the neighbourhood of the bridge, and, joining the Saxon guards, had taken possession of some houses, and begun to fire on the French columns; and that the sapper who had to fire the mine was misled into thinking that the enemy was coming up, and that the moment had come to blow up the bridge, and had therefore set fire to the powder. Others attributed the deplorable mistake to Colonel Montfort of the engineers, alleging that he had given the order in consequence of seeing the enemy's skirmishers. This version was adopted by the Emperor, who made a scapegoat of M. de Montfort, and ordered him to be brought to trial; but it was proved later on that he had nothing to do with it. Whatever the truth may have been, the army accused the chief of the staff of neglect; and it was said with reason that he ought to have entrusted the guardianship of the bridge to an entire brigade, making the general personally responsible for giving the order to fire the mine at the proper moment. But Berthier defended himself with his usual answer: 'The Emperor had given no orders.'

After the destruction of the bridge, some of the French threw themselves into the Elster, in the hope of swimming across. Some succeeded, including Marshal Macdonald; but the greater number, Prince Poniatowski among them, were drowned, because when they had crossed the river they could not get up the muddy banks, which were lined, moreover, with the enemy's skirmishers. Those of our men who remained in the town, thinking only how to sell their lives dearly, barricaded themselves behind the houses, and fought valiantly all the day and a part of the night; but their ammunition failed, their hastily-raised entrenchments were forced, and nearly all were slain. The slaughter did not cease till two in the morning.

All this time the allied sovereigns, Bernadotte among them, assembled in the chief square, were relishing their victory, and deliberating how best to make sure of its results. The number of French massacred in the houses is reckoned at 13,000, and

25,000 were made prisoners. The enemy took also 250 guns.

After this general account of the events which followed the battle of Leipzig, I ought to tell you what specially befell my regiment and Sébastiani's corps, to which it belonged. As we had for three days beaten off the enemy and held our part of the field, the troops were much astonished and grieved to hear on the evening of the 18th that for want of ammunition we were going to retreat. We hoped (and it seems to have been the Emperor's design) that he would at least go no further than beyond the Saale; where we might, in the neighbourhood of the fortress of Erfurt, replenish our powder wagons and recommence hostilities. We mounted then at 8 P.M. on October 18, and quitted the field where we had fought for three days, and where so many of our comrades had fallen with honour. Hardly were we out of our bivouac, when we felt the inconvenience arising from the neglect of the imperial staff to prepare for the retreat of so large an army. Every minute the columns were stopped by broad ditches, by marshes and brooks, which might so easily have been bridged. Horses and wheels stuck in the mud; and as the night was dark there were blocks everywhere. Our march was, therefore, very slow, and my regiment, being at the head of Exelmans', the leading division, did not reach the Lindenau bridge till 4 A.M. on the 19th. As we crossed it, we were far from foreseeing the frightful catastrophe which it was in a few hours to witness.

Day broke; the broad road was covered with troops of all arms in great number, which showed that the army would be still strong when it reached the Saale. The Emperor came by; but as he galloped along the flank of the column he heard none of the acclamations which were wont to proclaim his presence. The army was ill-content with the little care which had been taken to secure its retreat; but what would the troops have said if they had known with how little foresight the passage of the Elster had been arranged? They had crossed it; but many of their comrades were about to find their deaths there. We were halting at Markranstadt, a little town three leagues from Leipzig, when we heard the explosion of the mine; but instead of being grieved, all rejoiced; for we doubted not that it had been fired to prevent the passage of the enemy after all our columns were safe across.

During the few hours' rest which we took at Markranstadt I was able to look at our squadrons in detail, and learn the losses of the regiment in the three days' fighting. I was

horrified to find that they amounted to 149, of which sixty, including two captains, three lieutenants, and eleven non-commissioned officers, were killed ; a terrible proportion out of 700, which had been the strength of the regiment on the morning of the 16th. Nearly all the wounds were caused by grape- or round-shot, which unhappily allowed small hope of recovery. But my losses would, perhaps, have been twofold if I had not taken the precaution of keeping my regiment as much as possible out of artillery fire. To explain this I may point out that there are positions in which the most humane general finds himself under the painful necessity of exposing his men to the fire of cannon ; but it also often happens that they are exposed quite unnecessarily, especially in the case of cavalry, who are able to move quickly from place to place. It is just in the case of large bodies of cavalry and on great battlefields that precautions are most needed, but least taken. Now on October 16, at Leipzig, General Sébastiani having placed his three divisions between the villages of Wachau and Liebertvolkwitz, and indicated to each divisional commander approximately the ground which his division should take up, it fell to that of Exelmans' to be posted on undulating ground, broken into small mounds and hollows. The enemy's cavalry was a long way off, and therefore could not surprise us ; and I took advantage of the hollows in the ground to cover my regiment. Thus sheltered from artillery fire, and at the same time all ready to act, we had the satisfaction of seeing a great part of the day go by without our having a single man hit, while the regiments in our neighbourhood were losing pretty heavily.

I was congratulating myself on having placed my men so well when General Exelmans, on the plea that everyone should take his share of danger, ordered me, in spite of the remonstrances of my brigadier, to advance my regiment a hundred paces. I obeyed, and in a short time lost Captain Bertin killed and a score of men disabled. Then I tried a new plan, namely, to send troopers, well apart, to fire at the enemy's gunners with their carbines. This made the enemy also send out skirmishers, and when skirmishing was thus going on between the lines the enemy's guns could not fire on us for fear of hitting their own people. Ours were of course similarly hampered ; but to get the artillery silenced on even a small part of the line was all in our favour, as the enemy was far superior in that arm. Moreover, our infantry was just then at close quarters with that of the enemy in the villages, and the cavalry on both sides had nothing to do but await the issue ; so it was of no use for either

side to be smashing up the other with cannon-balls. A skirmishing engagement, in which for the most part more powder is burnt than damage done, was a much better way of spending the time. Accordingly, all the colonels followed my example, and much bloodshed was saved. Still more would have been, if General Exelmans had not given the order to recall the skirmishers: which was the signal to the enemy to pour a hail of shot on our squadrons. Luckily it was near the end of the day.

This was the evening of the 16th. All the cavalry colonels of the 2nd corps approved so highly this plan of economising human life that we all agreed to employ it on the 18th. When the enemy's guns opened we sent out skirmishers; and as these would have captured the guns had they been left undefended, our opponents had also to send out skirmishers, thus paralysing their artillery. The commander of the enemy's cavalry, probably divining our motive, did the same, with the result that on that day the artillery attached to the cavalry on both sides was much less employed. None the less we met in vigorous charges, but these had always a definite object, and in that case one must not spare oneself. But an artillery duel between two cavalry corps only leads to the useless slaughter of brave men. That was what Exelmans would not see, but as he was always rushing from one wing to another, as soon as he was a little way from a regiment the colonel would send out his skirmishers and the artillery would cease to speak. So persuaded were Sébastiani and all the cavalry generals of the merit of this plan, that Exelmans at last got orders to leave off teasing the enemy's gunners by firing at them when our squadrons were merely in observation. Two years later I employed the same system with the English artillery at Waterloo, and lost much less heavily than I otherwise should have done.

CHAPTER LXXXI.

While the Emperor and the divisions from Leipzig were halted at Markranstadt came the disastrous news of the destruction of the Lindenau bridge. The army had lost by this nearly all its artillery; half the troops were left as prisoners, and thousands of our wounded comrades handed over to the outrage of the hostile soldiery, hounded on by its infamous officers to the slaughter.[1] Grief was universal, for each man had a relation or a friend to mourn. The Emperor appeared overwhelmed; but he ordered Sébastiani's cavalry to return as far as the bridge for the protection of individuals who might succeed in crossing the river at one point or another. My regiment and the 24th, being the best mounted, were ordered to lead the column and to go at full trot. General Wathiez being unwell, it fell to me, as senior colonel, to command the brigade. Hardly had we traversed half the distance when we heard frequent shots, and as we drew near the suburb we could distinguish the despairing cries of the unhappy French, who, unable to retreat, and without cartridges, were being hunted from street to street, and butchered in a cowardly manner by Prussians, Badeners, and Saxons.

The fury of my two regiments was indescribable. Every man breathed vengeance, and regretted that vengeance was almost impossible, since the Elster, with its broken bridge, lay between us and the assassins. Our rage increased when we met about 2,000 French, mostly without clothing, and nearly all wounded, who had only escaped death by leaping into the river and swimming across under the fire from the other bank. Among them was Marshal Macdonald, who owed his life to his bodily strength and his practice in swimming. He was completely naked, and his horse had been drowned. I hastily got him some clothes and lent him my led horse, which allowed him to rejoin the Emperor at once and report the disaster he had witnessed, one of the chief episodes in it being the death by drowning of Prince Poniatowski.

The remainder of the French who had crossed the river, having had to get rid of their arms in order to be able to swim, were without means of defence; they were running across the fields to escape from some 400 or 500 Prussians and others, who, not content with the bath of French blood which they had

[1] [It is only fair to the victors to say that eye-witnesses give a very different account of their conduct towards the wounded than these expressions would seem to imply. But probably they only indicate the temper of the French army at the moment.]

had in the town and suburbs, had laid planks across the pieces of the exploded bridge and had come over to kill such of our unhappy soldiers as they could overtake on the road to Markranstadt. When I caught sight of this band of murderers I ordered M. Schneit, colonel of the 24th, to make a combined movement with my regiment, by means of which we enclosed these brigands in a vast semicircle. Then I gave the order to sound the charge. The effect was terrible. The bandits, taken by surprise, offered only a feeble resistance, and there was a very great slaughter, for no quarter was given. So enraged was I, that before the charge I had vowed to run my sword through all who came within my reach. Yet when I was in the thick of them and saw that they were drunk, in disorder, and with no commanders but two Saxon officers, who trembled before the approaching vengeance, I saw that it was no case of fighting, but an execution, in which it did not become me to take a part. I dreaded lest I might actually find pleasure in killing some of the scoundrels with my own hand. So I sheathed my sword, and left the task of exterminating the assassins to my troopers. Two-thirds of them fell on the spot; the rest, among them two officers and several men of the Saxon guards, fled towards the bridge in hope of recrossing the river by the planks. But as they could only go in single file, and our men were pressing them hard, they made for a large inn close by, whence they set to work to fire on my people, some Badish and Prussian pickets on the further bank aiding.

As it was probable that the noise of the fight might attract large forces towards the bridge, who, without crossing the river, could destroy my two regiments by musketry and artillery fire, I resolved to lose no time. I ordered most of my men to dismount, and taking a good supply of cartridges, to attack the inn in rear, and set fire to the stables and hay-lofts. On this, the assassins, finding themselves about to be caught by the flames, made an effort to escape; but as fast as they appeared at the gates the chasseurs shot them down. In vain did they send one of the Saxon officers to me: I refused to treat the monsters who had butchered our comrades as soldiers who surrendered honourably. The Prussian, Saxon, and Badish assassins who had crossed the foot-bridge were therefore all exterminated. I announced the fact to General Sébastiani, and he halted the other brigades half-way.

The fire which we had kindled soon reached the neighbouring houses. A great part of the village of Lindenau was burnt, and the reconstruction of the bridge and passage of the enemy's troops in pursuit of the French army thereby delayed.

Our expedition ended, I brought back the brigade to Markranstadt, as well as the 2,000 French who had escaped the disaster at the bridge. Among them were officers of all ranks. The Emperor questioned them as to what they knew regarding the explosion of the mine and the massacre of the French prisoners by the allies. It is probable that the sad tale made Napoleon regret that he had not followed the advice which had been given him that morning to secure the retreat of the army and prevent any attack from the enemy by setting fire to the suburbs, and, even, if necessary, to the town of Leipzig. I may say that nearly all the inhabitants had left the place during the three days' battle.

In our counter-attack at the bridge of Lindenau, only three men in my brigade had been wounded, and only one of my regiment, but he was one of my bravest and best non-commissioned officers, named Foucher. In the attack on the inn a bullet had made four holes in him, passing through both his thighs. In spite of this severe wound, the brave Foucher went through the retreat on horseback, refused to go into hospital at Erfurt, and accompanied the regiment into France. His comrades and all the troopers of his section took, indeed, particular care of him, and in all respects he deserved it.

When I left Leipzig I was in fear for the wounded men of my regiment whom I had left there, among them Major Pozac. But, fortunately, the distant suburb in which I had left them was not visited by the Prussians.

You will remember that during the last day of the battle an Austrian corps had wished to cut off our retreat by occupying Lindenau, and the Emperor had caused General Bertrand's troops to drive it back. After thus reopening communications Bertrand had reached Weissenfels, and we fell in with him there. After the losses caused by the destruction of the Lindenau bridge, there could be no more thought of halting on the Saale, so Napoleon passed that river. A fortnight before the battle, that stream had offered him an impregnable position, which he had then despised, in order to risk a general engagement in an open country with three rivers in his rear, besides a large town with its narrow streets. The great captain had reckoned too much on his star, and on the incapacity of the enemy's generals. These did, indeed, commit such gross blunders that, in spite of their immense superiority in numbers, not only were they unable in three days to take a single one of the villages which we held, but I have heard the King of the Belgians, who then was serving in the Russian army, admit to the Duke of Orleans that the allies were on two occasions in such confusion that the

order for retreat was given. However, the state of affairs changed, and it was our army which had to yield to misfortune.

After crossing the Saale Napoleon thanked and bade farewell to the officers and some troops of the Confederation of the Rhine who, whether from honourable feeling or for want of an opportunity to desert, were still in our ranks. He carried his magnanimity so far as to allow these soldiers to retain their arms, although, as their sovereigns had joined his enemies, he had the right to detain them as prisoners. The French army continued its retreat to Erfurt, with no event except the combat of Kosen, where a single French division beat an Austrian army corps, and took its commander Count Gyulai prisoner.

Always beguiled by the hope of returning to the attack of Germany, in which case the fortresses which he was compelled to leave would be of great service to him, Napoleon established a strong garrison at Erfurt. He had left 25,000 men under Saint-Cyr at Dresden, 30,000 at Hamburg under Davout, while the various fortresses on the Oder and the Elbe were garrisoned in proportion to their importance. These were additional losses to those which Dantzig and the other places on the Vistula had already cost us. I need not repeat here what I have said about the inconvenience of distributing forces to hold places from which one is about to retire, but will merely say that Napoleon left in the fortresses of Germany 80,000 soldiers, not one of whom saw France again before the fall of the Empire ; which they might, perhaps, have prevented if they had been united on our frontiers.

Our artillery repaired its losses in the arsenal of Erfurt. The Emperor, who up till then had borne his reverses with stoic fortitude, was affected by the desertion of his brother-in-law. Under the pretext of going to defend his kingdom of Naples, Murat left Napoleon, to whom he owed everything. Formerly so brilliant in war, he had done nothing remarkable during this campaign. It is certain that while he was still among us he had been keeping up a correspondence with Metternich, and the Austrian minister, placing before his eyes the example of Bernadotte, had, in the name of the allied sovereigns, guaranteed him the preservation of his kingdom if he would take his place among Napoleon's enemies. Murat left the French army at Erfurt, and no sooner had he reached Naples than he prepared to make war upon us.

At Erfurt also the Emperor heard of the audacious manœuvre of the Bavarians, his former allies, who, after betraying his cause, had joined an Austrian corps, and marched, under command of General Wrede, with the intention not only of opposing the passage of the French army, but of taking it and the

Emperor prisoners. Wrede marched for two days parallel with our army, and was already at Würzburg with 60,000 men. He detached 10,000 towards Frankfort, and with the remainder proceeded towards the small fortress of Hanau, with a view of blocking the road to the French. He had been with us on the Russian campaign, and thought to find the French army still in the wretched state to which cold and hunger had reduced it when it reached the Beresina ; but we soon showed him that, in spite of our misfortunes, we still had some troops in good condition, and quite enough to beat the Austrians and Bavarians.

Not knowing that beyond Erfurt the allied troops whom we had fought at Leipzig had been following us only at a considerable distance, Wrede had become very enterprising, and thought to catch us between two fires. This he could not do ; still, as several of the enemy's corps were seeking to outflank our right by way of the Franconian Mountains, while the Bavarians met us in front, our situation might become critical. Then Napoleon, rising to the height of the danger, marched briskly on Hanau, the approaches to which are covered by thick forests, and especially by the famous defile of Geluhausen, through which the Kinzig flows. This stream, the banks of which are very steep, runs between two mountains where there is only a narrow passage for the river, beside which a very fine road has been hewn out of the rock, going from Fulda to Frankfort-on-Main, by way of Hanau. Sébastiani's cavalry, which had acted as advance-guard from Weissenfels to Fulda, ought at that point where the road enters the mountains to have been replaced by infantry. I have never known for what reason that grand principle of war was not followed on this occasion ; but, to our surprise, Exelmans' light cavalry division continued to march in front of the army. My regiment and the 24th were at the head, and I commanded the brigade. We learned from the peasants that the Austro-Bavarian army was already at Hanau, and that a strong division was coming to meet us to dispute our passage through the defile.

My position as commander of the advance-guard now became very ticklish. How was I, without a single foot-soldier, and with my cavalry shut in between lofty hills and an impassable torrent, to attack infantry whose scouts could climb the rocks and shoot us down at point-blank range ? I at once sent to the rear of the column to let the general know, but Exelmans was not to be found. So, as my orders were to advance, and I could not stop the divisions behind me, I marched on, until at an elbow in the valley my scouts reported that there was a

detachment of the enemy's hussars in front. The Austrians and Bavarians had made the same mistake as our leaders. We had to attack with cavalry a long and narrow defile in which not more than ten or twelve horses could walk abreast, and they were sending cavalry to defend a place which a hundred light infantry could have held against any number of horse. I was rejoiced to see that the enemy had no infantry, and as I knew by experience that when two columns meet in a narrow place the advantage is always to the side that makes the charge, I sent my picked company ahead at full speed. Only the first section could touch the enemy, but it did it so thoroughly that the Austrian column was thrown into disorder, and my troopers had only to hold their swords straight.

We pursued for more than an hour. The enemy were Ott's regiment, and I never saw finer hussars. They were just from Vienna; and their uniforms, handsome, if a little theatrical, were as new and smart as you could wish. You might have thought they came from a ball-room or a theatre. Their brilliant costume contrasted strangely with the more than modest get-up of our chasseurs, many of whom were still wearing the clothes, stained with smoke and dust, in which they had bivouacked for a year and a half past; but brave hearts and sturdy limbs were inside them. The white jackets of Ott's hussars were soon terribly blood-stained, and the trim regiment lost more than 200 killed and wounded. Not one of ours was touched, as the enemy never had a chance of turning round. Our men took a number of excellent horses and gold-laced jackets. So far all had gone well; but as I galloped after the stream of pursuers I was not without anxiety as to the end of this curious fight. The hills on each side of the stream were falling away, and it was clear that we were approaching the end of the valley. There we should probably find a plain full of infantry, and might have to pay dear for our success. Happily it was not so. On issuing from the defile we saw nothing but the cavalry, including the main portion of Ott's hussars, whom we had just handled so roughly, and who now drew along some fifteen squadrons with them in their headlong retreat on Hanau.

Then General Sébastiani made his three divisions of cavalry debouch. These were soon supported by the infantry under Victor and Macdonald, with several batteries; the Emperor and part of the guard presently appeared, and the remainder of the army followed. It was the evening of October 21. We bivouacked in a neighbouring wood, at not more than a league from Hanau and the Austro-Bavarian army.

CHAPTER LXXXII.

What had kept Exelmans at the rear during our passage of the defile was the following incident. Before entering the valley the scouts had brought in two Austrian soldiers who had straggled from their army, and were taken drinking in a lonely village. Exelmans had them questioned in German by one of his aides-de-camp, when, to his surprise, they answered in very good French. On his asking where they had learnt it so well, one of the wretches, who was half-drunk, thinking to make himself important, exclaimed that they were Parisians. Hardly had he uttered the words when the general, enraged at seeing Frenchmen in arms against their countrymen, ordered them to be shot on the spot. They were seized; but no sooner had the poor lad, who in order to show off had claimed to be French, been put to death, than his comrade, sobered by the sight, protested that neither of them had ever set foot in France. They had been born at Vienna of naturalised Parisian parents, and compelled, as domiciled in the Empire, to serve in the army, and to enter the regiment assigned to them. To prove the truth of what he said, he showed his papers and those of his unlucky comrade. Finally, yielding to the entreaty of his aides-de-camp, Exelmans consented to spare the innocent man.

Then, hearing the sound of the fight, the general wished to reach the head of my column; but so rapid was the pace at which the two regiments were pursuing the enemy, that he found it impossible to get within the ranks. After several attempts to do so, he and his horse were hustled into the Kinzig, where he was nearly drowned.

During the night the Emperor relieved the army very materially by sending all the baggage off to Coblentz, escorted by some battalions of infantry and the cavalry of Lefebvre-Desnouettes and Milhau. On the morning of the 30th he had with him only Macdonald's and Victor's infantry, 5,000 bayonets in all, and Sébastiani's cavalry.

On the side by which we approached Hanau is covered by a great forest, through which the road passes; the trees of which are large enough to allow scarcely impeded movement. The town of Hanau is on the further bank of the Kinzig. General Wrede, who as a rule was not devoid of military talent, had committed the huge blunder of posting his army with the river in its rear; thereby depriving it of the support offered by the

fortifications of Hanau. His only means of communication and retreat was by the bridge of Lamboy. No doubt the position which he occupied barred the road to Frankfort and to France, and he thought himself well able to stop us.

At daybreak on October 30 the battle began. It was like a great hunting expedition. A few rounds of grape, the fire of the infantry skirmishers, and a charge in loose order by Sébastiani's cavalry dispersed the enemy's first line, awkwardly posted on the edge of the wood. But when we had advanced a little further, our squadrons could only act in the few clearings, and the light infantry pursued the Bavarians singly, driving them from tree to tree till they got out of the wood. Then they were brought up by the enemy's line, 40,000 strong, with eighty guns in its front. If the Emperor had then had all the troops whom he brought away from Leipzig, a vigorous attack would have mastered the bridge, and Wrede would have paid dear for his rashness; but the corps of Mortier, Marmont, and Bertrand, and the great park of artillery had been delayed by the defiles, and Napoleon had only 10,000 combatants at his disposal. The enemy should have seized the opportunity for a brisk charge; but they did not venture it, and their hesitation allowed time for the artillery of the guard to come up. As soon as General Drouot, who commanded it, had fifteen pieces on the field he opened fire; and his line increased gradually, till it showed fifty guns. These he caused to advance firing, though he had few troops to support him; but this, owing to the smoke of so great a battery, the enemy did not find out. At last, just as a puff of wind drove the smoke away, the chasseurs of the guard appeared.

At the sight of the bearskins the Bavarian infantry recoiled in consternation. Wishing to check the disorder at any cost, General Wrede made all the cavalry at his disposal charge our guns, and in a moment the battery was surrounded by a cloud of horsemen. But at the voice of their intrepid chief, who, sword in hand, was setting the example of a valiant resistance, the French gunners seized their muskets and remained immovable behind the carriages, whence they fired on the enemy at close quarters. Numbers would, however, have triumphed, but that at the Emperor's order the whole of Sébastiani's cavalry and that of the guard, grenadiers, dragoons, chasseurs, Mamelukes, lancers, dashed furiously on the enemy, killing a great number and dispersing the rest. Then flying upon the squares of Bavarian infantry, they broke them with heavy loss, and the routed Bavarian army fled towards the bridge and the town of Hanau.

General Wrede, being a brave man, determined, before owning himself beaten by a force of half his own strength, to make a fresh effort. Assembling all his available troops, he attacked us unexpectedly. The musketry fire suddenly drew near to us; again the forest re-echoed with the roar of the cannon, the balls whistled through the trees, bringing great branches down with a crash. The wood was too deep for the eye to penetrate; through the shade cast by the thick foliage of the huge beeches one could barely see the occasional flashes of the guns. On hearing the noise of this attack the Emperor sent off in that direction the grenadiers of his Old Guard, under General Friant. These soon repulsed this last effort of the enemy, who quickly left the field of battle and rallied under shelter of the fortress of Hanau. During the night they abandoned this also, leaving a great number of wounded, and the French occupied the place.

We were only two short leagues from Frankfort, where there is a stone bridge over the Main. Now, as the French army had to march along this river to reach the French frontier at Mainz, Napoleon sent forward General Sébastiani's corps with a division of infantry to occupy Frankfort and destroy the bridge, he himself with the main army bivouacking in the forest. The high road from Hanau to Frankfort passes close along the right bank of the Main. My friend General Albert, who commanded the infantry which accompanied us, had been married some years before at Offenbach, a pretty little town on the left bank, exactly opposite the spot where, having emerged from the forest of Hanau, we rested our horses in the wide plain of Frankfort. Finding himself so near his wife and children, General Albert could not resist the desire to get news of them, and still more to reassure them of his safety after the battles of Leipzig and Hanau. To this end he exposed himself perhaps to more danger than in those sanguinary engagements. Advancing in uniform and on horseback to the edge of the stream, in spite of all we could say, he hailed a boatman who knew him. While he was talking to this man, a Bavarian officer, coming up at the head of an infantry picket, ordered them to make ready, and was about to fire on the French general. However, a number of inhabitants and of boatmen placed themselves in front of the muskets and stopped the soldiers from firing, for Albert was much beloved at Offenbach. As I looked at that town where I had just been fighting in my country's service I little thought that I should one day take refuge there from the proscription of the French Government, and should pass three years there in exile.

The Emperor, on leaving the forest of Hanau, had scarcely

gone two leagues on the road to Frankfort when he learned that the battle had begun again behind him. The Bavarian general, who had feared after his defeat that the Emperor would stick to his heels till he had made an end of him, when he saw that the French army cared more about reaching the Rhine than about pursuing him, plucked up courage and made a smart attack on our rear-guard. But the corps of Macdonald, Marmont, and Bertrand, who had occupied Hanau during the night, received his army with the bayonet, and overthrew it with great slaughter. General Wrede was severely wounded, and his son-in-law, the Prince of Oettingen, was killed. The command of the enemy's army devolved on the Austrian general Fresnel, who gave orders for a retreat, while we continued our march to the Rhine unmolested, crossing it on November 2 and 3, after a campaign in which brilliant victories had been mingled with depressing reverses. The cause of these last was Napoleon's mistake in quarrelling with Austria instead of making peace after his victories in the month of June. All Germany followed, and Napoleon soon had the whole of Europe against him.

After our return to France the Emperor stayed only six days at Mainz, and then went to Paris—a prompt departure with which the army found fault. It was admitted that there were strong political reasons calling him to Paris; but it was thought that the duty of reorganising the army also had claims on him, and that he should have gone to and fro between it and the capital, for experience might have taught him that when he was absent little or nothing was done.

The last cannon-shots which I heard in 1813 were fired at the battle of Hanau, and that day went very near to be the last of my life. My regiment charged five times—twice upon infantry squares, once upon guns, and twice on Bavarian cavalry; but the greatest danger which I ran arose from the explosion of a wagon full of shells, which took place close to me. As I have said, the Emperor ordered the cavalry to make a general charge at a very difficult moment. Now, in such a case, it is not enough for a commanding officer, and especially when he is engaged in a forest, to send his regiment straight forward, as I have seen many do; he must cast a rapid glance over the ground to which his squadrons are coming, so that he may not lead them into swampy places. I marched, therefore, some paces in front, followed by my regimental staff, and having beside me a trumpeter who signalled, as I bade, the obstacles which the various squadrons would find in front of them. Although the trees stood wide apart, the passage

through the forest was difficult for cavalry, because the ground was piled with men and horses killed or wounded, and with weapons, guns, and wagons which the Bavarians had left. It is easy to see that it is difficult in such a case for a colonel, as he gallops amid bullets and cannon-balls, to examine the ground which his squadrons have to cross, and at the same time take any thought for his personal safety. I had to leave this to the intelligence and nimbleness of my excellent horse Azolan; but the small group which followed me close had been greatly thinned by a discharge of grape, which had wounded many of my orderlies, and I had only my trumpeter near me, when suddenly from the whole line I heard shouts of 'Colonel! colonel! look out!' and ten paces from me I saw a Bavarian artillery wagon which one of our shells had just set on fire. A huge tree which had been cut down by the cannon-balls barred the road in front of me. To go round would have taken me too long. I called to the trumpeter to stoop, and lying flat over my saddle-bow, I took my horse at the jump. Azolan made a long leap, but not long enough to clear all the branches, and his legs got caught among them. Meantime the wagon was blazing and the powder would take fire in a moment. I gave myself up for lost, when my horse, as though he had understood our common danger, began bounding four or five feet high, always getting further from the wagon, and as soon as he was clear of the branches he went off at such a stretching gallop that he was almost literally *ventre à terre*. I shivered when the explosion took place, but I must have been out of the reach of the bursting shells, for neither my horse nor I was touched. It was otherwise with my young trumpeter, for when the regiment resumed its march after the explosion they saw the poor fellow dead and horribly mutilated by the splinters. His horse also was blown to pieces. My brave Azolan had saved me already at the Katzbach, and now I owed him my life a second time. I caressed him, and, as though to show his joy, the poor animal whinnied aloud. There are moments when one is led to believe that some creatures have far more intelligence than is generally thought.

I keenly regretted my trumpeter, who was beloved by the whole regiment no less for his courage than for his general behaviour. He was the son of a professor at the college of Toulouse; had been through his course there, and took great delight in spouting Latin. An hour before his death the poor lad, having observed that nearly all the trees in the forest of Hanau were beeches, and that their spreading branches formed

a kind of roof, found it a suitable occasion to repeat the Eclogue of Virgil which begins with the verse:—

Tityre, tu patulæ recubans sub tegmine fagi.

Marshal Macdonald, who happened to pass at the moment, laughed heartily, exclaiming, 'There's a little chap whose memory isn't disturbed by his surroundings! It is certainly the first time that anyone has recited Virgil under the fire of the enemy's guns.'

'He who takes the sword shall perish with the sword,' says the Scripture. If this saying does not apply to all soldiers, it did to many of them under the Empire. M. Guindet, who in October 1806 had killed Prince Lewis of Prussia at Saalfeldt, was himself killed at the battle of Hanau. No doubt it was the fear of a like fate which led the Russian general Czernicheff to fly from the danger. You will remember that early in 1812 that officer, then a favourite aide-de-camp of the Emperor Alexander, happening to be at Paris, had abused his position to corrupt two poor officials in the War Office.[1] They were executed for selling information about the French army, while the Russian colonel only avoided the punishment which he deserved by secretly escaping from France. On returning to his own country, M. de Czernicheff, though more of a courtier than of a soldier, became a general, and in that capacity commanded a Cossack division, the only Russian troops at Hanau. The part its leader played there made him the byword of the Austrians and Bavarians who were present at that fight. So long as Czernicheff expected to meet none but sick and demoralised troops, he crowed loudly; but he changed his tone when he found himself face to face with the veterans from Leipzig. General Wrede had at first much trouble to make him take his place in the line, and no sooner did he hear the roar of our artillery than with his 3,000 horsemen he trotted away from the battlefield, amid the hootings of the Austrians and Bavarians. General Wrede hurried up in person to reproach him. Czernicheff replied that his horses wanted food, and that he was going to bait them in the neighbouring villages. This excuse was thought so ridiculous that before long the walls of nearly every town in Germany were covered with caricatures representing Czernicheff feeding his horses on bundles of laurel gathered in the forest of Hanau. The Germans can be caustic sometimes.

The remnants of the French army expected when they

[1] [See p. 490.]

crossed the Rhine that their hardships would be at an end as soon as they were on their native soil; but they were greatly mistaken. The Government and the Emperor himself had so reckoned on our success that no arrangements had been made to receive the troops at the frontier and reorganise them. On the very day of our entry into Mainz the men and horses would have had no food if they had not been billeted about in the neighbouring towns and villages. The inhabitants, however, had had no experience of feeding soldiers since the old Revolutionary wars. They complained loudly, and in fact the charge fell too heavily on the communes.

The sick and wounded were established as well as circumstances permitted in the hospitals of Mainz, and in order to watch the line of the Rhine from Basle to Holland all able-bodied men joined the nuclei of their regiments, and the divisions and army corps, sadly weakened, were distributed along the river. My regiment, with what was left of Sébastiani's corps, went down the Rhine by easy marches. The weather was splendid, and the country lovely; but we were all heart-broken, foreseeing, as we did, that France was going to lose these fair countries, and that her misfortunes would not stop there.

After passing some time at Cleves and Urdingen, we went on to Nimeguen. On the further bank we could see the Dutch and German population tearing the French flag from their towers and replacing those of their old sovereign. Amid our melancholy thoughts the colonels did their best to reorganise their few remaining troops; but we could do little for want of supplies. Moreover, the necessity of feeding the army forced the Emperor to keep it scattered; while in order to organise it, it should have been concentrated. Meanwhile the enemy required time to recover from the rough handling we had given them, and were in no condition to cross the Rhine and interfere with our reorganisation. They left us alone, therefore, throughout November and December, and I passed those months chiefly on the banks of the Rhine with the phantom of an army corps commanded by Macdonald.

At length all the colonels received orders to take all their men who were unmounted to the depôts of their regiments, and that of the 23rd Chasseurs being still at Mons, I went there. There I saw the eventful year 1813 out—a year in which I had borne many toils and incurred many dangers. But before concluding my account of it I must briefly describe the closing events of the campaign.

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

THE German fortresses in which we had left garrisons were soon invested, and some of them besieged. By the end of 1813 only four were still standing. These were Hamburg, where the intrepid Davout succeeded in holding the place till the Emperor abdicated and the garrison was recalled to France; Magdeburg, which General le Marois also held till the end of the war; Wittenberg, which was bravely defended by old General Lapoype, and taken by assault on January 12; and, lastly, Erfurt, which had to capitulate for want of provisions. All the other fortresses had already fallen into the hands of the enemy. In the case of Dresden and Dantzig, their occupation was discreditable to the allied armies. When, after the battle of Leipzig, Napoleon was retreating to France with the remnants of his army, leaving 25,000 men at Dresden under Saint-Cyr, the marshal endeavoured to cut his way through the blockading force. Several times he drove them back, but at length, overwhelmed by superior forces, and short of provisions, he was constrained to accept an honourable capitulation. The terms were that the garrison should retain their arms, that they should not be prisoners of war, and should return to France by regular marches. The marshal would have preferred that his troops should march as a united army corps, and bivouac together every night, which would have allowed them to defend themselves in the event of treachery; but the enemy's generals pointed out that the country was too much exhausted to furnish rations for 25,000 men in the same place; and, yielding to necessity, the French marshal agreed to divide his force into columns of 2,000 to 3,000 men, who marched one or even two days' journeys apart.

During the first days all went on as it should; but as soon as the last column was out of Dresden, having handed over the forts and the munitions of war, the allied generals declared that they had no power to sign the capitulation without the consent of the generalissimo, Prince Schwarzenberg, and that as he would not ratify it, it was null and void. They offered, indeed,

to let our troops return to Dresden, putting them in exactly the position in which they were on the day of the capitulation, that is, with provisions for a few days only. But so long as the French occupied the place they had concealed their destitution; now that the enemy knew it, their offer was, of course, illusory. Our troops were indignant at this breach of faith; but what could they do? The enemy had taken care to surround our isolated detachments with battalions, posted previously at the places where the news of the breach of the capitulation would reach the various columns. Resistance was out of the question, and our people were under the sad necessity of laying down their arms.

After the treachery committed on the field of Leipzig came the breach of capitulations, which up to then all civilised nations held sacred. None the less have the Germans chanted 'Victory'; for everything, even dishonour, seemed to them allowable in order to crush Napoleon. All the allied sovereigns having adopted this new and iniquitous law of nations, they put it in force with regard to the garrison of Dantzig. After a vigorous defence of that place, General Rapp was forced, by want of provisions, to surrender, on condition that the garrison should return to France. Yet, in spite of the treaty signed by the Prince of Wurtemberg, who commanded the besieging army, this condition was basely violated, and the brave defenders of Dantzig, to the number of 10,000, were sent as prisoners into Russia, where most of them perished from their hardships.

A conspicuous feature of that siege was the conduct of an infantry captain in the garrison, M. de Chambure. This brave and intelligent officer obtained leave to form a 'free company,' composed of picked volunteers. This band undertook the most venturesome enterprises. It used to go at night and surprise the besiegers' outposts, penetrate within their trenches, destroy their works, spike their guns, and go out into the country to plunder their convoys. One night Chambure took boat with his men, surprised a Russian cantonment, set fire to an ammunition train, destroyed several magazines, killed or wounded more than 150 men, and returned in triumph with a loss of only three. Not long after he attacked a breaching battery, captured it, and spiked the guns. Then, uniting banter to courage, he left in the muzzle of a mortar a letter to the Prince of Wurtemberg, to this effect: 'Prince: as your shells spoil my sleep, I have had to come and spike your mortars. Do not wake me any more, or I shall be obliged to come and see you again.' He did, indeed, come again more than once, and spread a panic

among the enemy's sappers and gunners. Horace Vernet has made his name popular by a picture of him in the act of depositing his letter in the mortar.

The frequent desertions which took place at this time remind me of the following anecdote.[1] Among the generals who served under Washington in the War of American Independence, the bravest, most able, and most esteemed by the army was General Arnold. He had lost a leg in battle, and yet such was his patriotism that he continued to fight against the enemies of his country. Ultimately, however, having quarrelled with Washington, on account of some supposed favouritism, he deserted and took service in the British army, becoming one of the most dangerous enemies of his countrymen. Some time afterwards an armistice was signed. Several American officers advanced between the two camps, and were met by some English officers, among whom was General Arnold. A friendly conversation ensued, until Arnold, perceiving that his former friends were displeased at his presence, remarked that he was surprised at this, for though he was fighting against them now, they should not forget that he had lost a leg in the American service. Upon this an American replied, 'We remember it quite well, and if ever you fall into our hands your wooden leg shall be deposited in the Capitol to remind our descendants of the heroic courage you displayed when fighting for the independence of your country, after which we shall hang the remainder of you on a gallows as a warning to traitors.'

But let us return to the situation of the French armies in December 1813. Spain, the original cause of the catastrophe which marked the end of Napoleon's reign, had been stripped of a great many of the best troops, who were required to reinforce the army in Germany. There were, however, still more than 100,000 men in the Peninsula—enough to keep the enemy in check if Napoleon had left Marshal Soult in command. But as he was determined to turn his brother Joseph into a general capable of defending the kingdom which he had given him, the Emperor entrusted the command of the army in Spain to that highly estimable but very unmilitary prince. It is true he gave him Marshal Jourdan as chief of the staff; but Jourdan was prematurely old, and had seen no service since the early days

[1] [Many regrettable desertions took place, even among officers, from the garrisons of the fortresses, notably from that of Dresden, which was composed of troops belonging to different nations. The deserters were warmly welcomed in the Russian camp, and fought against us during the subsequent campaign in France.]

of the Revolution. He was worn out morally and physically, and inspired no confidence in the troops. Thus, in spite of the ability shown by Suchet, Reille, Foy, Clausel, and other generals who served under King Joseph, the Anglo-Portuguese armies commanded by Lord Wellington, and assisted by the Spanish guerillas, inflicted on us irreparable losses. The French had been compelled to leave Madrid, recross the Ebro, and concentrate their main forces round the town of Vittoria. Attacked in that position by an army three times greater than their own,[1] they lost a battle all the more disastrous in its results that King Joseph and Marshal Jourdan had taken no precautions to secure the retreat. The King's carriages, those of a number of Spaniards who had taken his side, and were flying from the vengeance of their countrymen, parks of artillery, treasure wagons, everything was in confusion, and the regiments had much difficulty in making their way through. They did not, however, break up, and, in spite of the vigorous attacks of the enemy, the bulk of the army succeeded in retreating to Pampeluna. The battle of Vittoria did credit to the ability and courage of General Clausel, who rallied and directed the army. In that unhappy day the French lost 6,000 killed, wounded, and prisoners, and left most of their artillery, and nearly all their baggage, in the enemy's hands.

In spite of this check our troops might have maintained their footing in Navarre, but King Joseph ordered them to retreat beyond the Bidassoa, directing General Foy, who commanded the rear-guard, to destroy the bridge. Thus by the end of June we had abandoned Spain in that direction. Marshal Suchet still held out in Aragon, Catalonia, and the kingdom of Valencia, but after the battle of Vittoria Wellington was able to send reinforcements to the south of Spain, and Suchet had to evacuate Valencia, both kingdom and city.

At this moment the Emperor was still triumphant in Germany. As soon as he learned the state of affairs beyond the Pyrenees he hastened to revoke the powers he had given to Joseph and Jourdan, and appointed Marshal Soult his lieutenant-general over all the Spanish armies. After reorganising the divisions Soult made a great effort to succour the French garrison left in Pampeluna; but the place was obliged to capitulate, and he had to take his troops back across the Bidassoa. The fortress of St. Sebastian, under its brave governor, General Rey,

[1] [The Anglo-Portuguese army numbered somewhat over 83,000, with 90 guns. The French muster-roll was lost in the battle, but Soult had probably about 60,000 combatants, and 143 of his guns were captured (Napier).]

held out for a long time; but it was finally taken by assault, and the English and Portuguese, oblivious of all humanity, pillaged, violated, and massacred the unhappy inhabitants, allies though they were. The English officers took no steps to put a stop to these atrocities, which, to the disgrace of Wellington, his generals, and the English nation, went on for three whole days.[1]

Foot by foot Soult defended the Pyrenees, and beat Wellington several times; but the superior forces at the disposal of the latter allowed him to return incessantly to the attack, until he succeeded in establishing himself within our frontiers, and fixing his head-quarters at St. Jean de Luz, the first French town, which had never been lost to France, either by the defeats of Francis I. or by the disastrous wars at the end of the reign of Louis XIV.

It is hard to believe that after the desertion of the German troops at Leipzig Marshal Soult should have thought that he could keep German soldiers in the Army of the Pyrenees. In one night they all went over to the enemy and increased Wellington's forces. However, Soult collected several divisions under the ramparts of Bayonne, and attacked the English again. On December 9 a battle began which lasted five days, and was one of the most bloody of the war. It cost the enemy 16,000 men, and the French 10,000; but they, nevertheless, took up their position again round Bayonne.

Before this, Marshal Suchet, having heard in October of Napoleon's reverses in Germany, understood that he could no longer hold out in the south of Spain, and prepared to draw nearer to France. Retreating on Tarragona, he blew up the ramparts, and added the garrison to his army. His retreat, though molested by the Spaniards, was effected in good order, and by the end of December 1813 he and his troops were established at Gerona.

To complete our view of the situation of the French armies at the end of 1813, we must remember that in the spring of that year the Emperor had assembled in Tyrol, and in his kingdom of Italy, a numerous army under his stepson, Eugène Beauharnais. That prince was a man of a kind and gentle disposition, and very devoted to the Emperor; but, though a far better soldier than Joseph, he fell very far short of being fit to

[1] [Readers of Napier will remember the indignant tone in which he speaks of the atrocities committed by some of the English and Portuguese soldiers at the capture of St. Sebastian, and also the manner in which English and Portuguese officers, at the risk, and in some cases at the cost, of their own lives, exerted themselves to get the men in hand again.]

command an army. On this point the Emperor was misled by the affection he felt for him. On August 28, the day on which the armistice between Napoleon and the allies was to end in Germany, the Austrians, who had hitherto been neutral, declared themselves our enemies beyond the Alps. Hostilities were never very active, for the chiefs on both sides understood that the success of the campaign would depend upon the result of events in Germany. Still there were frequent combats with varying fortunes; but the superior forces of the Austrians, who were soon joined by an English corps, ultimately compelled the viceroy to withdraw the Franco-Italian army across the Adige.

In November came the news of the defection of Murat, King of Naples. The Emperor, to whom he owed everything, could not at first believe it; but it was only too real. Murat had joined his flag to that of Austria, and his troops were already in occupation of Bologna. Such is the fickleness of Italians that they everywhere greeted the Austrians and Neapolitans, whom they had hated before, and soon afterwards hated still more bitterly. In December, the viceroy's army, 43,000 strong only, occupied Verona and the neighbourhood.

On seeing all Europe in coalition against him Napoleon could not hide from himself that the first condition of peace imposed on him would be the re-establishment of the Bourbons on the throne of Spain. He resolved, therefore, to do of his own proper motion what he foresaw he would presently be compelled to do. He restored King Ferdinand VII. to liberty, and ordered Suchet's army to retire on the Pyrenees.

Thus at the end of 1813 we had lost all Germany, all Spain, and most of Italy; while Wellington's army had crossed the Bidassoa, and was encamped on French territory, threatening Bayonne, Navarre, and the district of Bordeaux.

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

I BEGAN the year 1814 at Mons. Physically, I ran no dangers that year equal to those of its predecessors; but I underwent far greater moral suffering.

All my troopers who were still mounted having remained at Nimeguen, I found at the depôt only men in want of horses. These I was trying to supply from the Ardennes, when the course of events interfered. On January 1, after nearly three months' hesitation, the enemy crossed the Rhine at several points. The two most important were Caub, between Bingen and Coblentz, close to the Lurlei; and Basle, where the Swiss violated their neutrality by throwing open the bridge. They have a way of insisting on or renouncing their neutrality according to their interests of the moment.

The number of the invading troops was reckoned at 500,000 to 600,000. France was exhausted by twenty-five years of war; more than half her soldiers were prisoners in foreign lands, and many of her provinces were ready to break away on the first opportunity; among them, that to which Mons, the capital of the department of Jemmapes, belonged. This broad and rich country, annexed at first to France *de facto* by the war of 1792, and then *de jure* by the Treaty of Amiens, had grown so accustomed to the union that it had distinguished itself after the Russian disaster by the zeal which it displayed in helping the Emperor to restore his army to its former footing, and the willingness with which it complied with all kinds of requisitions. But our losses in Germany had taken heart out of the Belgians, and I found the spirit of the population changed. There was regret for the old paternal government of Austria, and a keen desire for separation from France, and the perpetual wars which were ruining commerce and industry. In short, Belgium was only awaiting the opportunity to revolt; and owing to her position in rear of the weak army corps which we had on the Rhine, nothing could have been more dangerous for us. The Emperor accordingly sent troops to Brussels under General Maison, a man of ability and solid character.

After visiting various departments he found that that of Jemmapes, and especially the town of Mons, was deeply dis-

affected. People talked openly of taking men against the weak garrisons; nor could the commandant, General O——, gouty, old, and indolent, as a native of Belgium, besides, afraid of compromising himself in the eyes of his countrymen, have done anything to hinder it. General Maison relieved him of his functions, and appointed me commandant of the department of Jemmapes. It was a difficult duty; for next to the men of Liège, those of Mons and its district are the boldest and most turbulent in all Belgium; while to keep them in check I had only a battalion of 400 recruits, some gendarmes, and 200 dismounted troopers of my own regiment, fifty of whom were natives of those parts. All I could really count on, therefore, were the remaining 150 chasseurs, who, being French by birth, and having all fought under me, would have followed me anywhere. The officers were good; and those of the infantry, especially the major, were perfectly willing to back me up. Yet I could not but see that if we came to blows the odds would be great. From my hotel I could see every day 3,000 or 4,000 peasants and artisans, armed with big sticks, assembling in the square and listening to the talk of certain retired Austrian officers. These men, all wealthy and of good family, had left the service when Belgium was joined to France, and now preached against the Empire, which had loaded them with taxes, carried their children off to the wars, and so forth. This talk found all the readier listeners for being addressed by great landowners to their tenants and persons whom they employed, and over whom they had great influence.

Every day, too, brought news of the enemy's advance from Brussels, driving before them the remnants of Macdonald's corps. All French officials left the department to take refuge at Valenciennes and Cambrai. Finally, the mayor of Mons, M. Duval de Beaulieu, felt bound in honour to warn me that I and my small garrison were no longer safe amid the excited populace, and that I had better evacuate the town. No hindrance would be offered, as the regiment had lived on perfectly good terms with the inhabitants. This proposal came, I was aware, from a committee of ex-Austrian officers, and they had sent it through the mayor in the hope of intimidating me. Therefore I determined to show my teeth, and begged M. Duval to summon a meeting of the town council and notables, when I would reply to the proposal he had made. Half-an-hour later my garrison was under arms; and as soon as the town council, accompanied by the wealthier inhabitants, appeared in the square, I mounted my horse so that all could hear, and,

having told the mayor that before talking to him and the council I had an important order to give my troops, I imparted to them the proposal which had been made that we should leave without a fight the town which had been given into our keeping. They were indignant, and said so plainly. I added that no doubt the ramparts were broken down in many places and had no guns, so that it would be difficult to defend them against regular troops; but that if, contrary to the laws of nations, the civil population of the town and district rose against us, we need not confine ourselves to the defensive, but should treat them as rebels, and have the right to attack them by every means in our power. I therefore ordered my men to take possession of the belfry, and thence, after half-an-hour's delay and three summons by beat of drum, to fire on the crowd in the square; while patrols were to clear the streets, shooting down especially the country people, who had left their work to make trouble for us. Lastly, I ordered that, fighting once begun, the town was to be set on fire to occupy the inhabitants, and that in order to prevent the flames from being extinguished the men were to keep firing on the burning quarters.

This speech will seem to you pretty brutal; but think of my critical position. With only 700 men, few of whom had seen any fighting, I was surrounded by a multitude which increased every moment, and the officer in command on the tower told me that all the roads leading to the town were covered with dense masses of colliers from the mines of Jemmapes, making their way to Mons. If I did not act with energy my little band was in danger of being crushed. The nobles who had promoted the rising, and the inhabitants of the town, felt the force of my discourse, and began to withdraw; but the peasants did not stir; so I ordered up two wagons of ammunition and distributed a hundred cartridges to each soldier. Then I gave the order to load, and bade the drums beat the three rolls which were to precede a volley. At the dreaded signal the crowd fled in disorder into the nearest streets, and in a few moments the leaders of the Austrian party, with the mayor at their head, came to shake me by the hand and implore me to spare the town. I agreed on condition that they would instantly order the colliers and workmen to return home. They accepted eagerly, and the young men of fashion who had the best horses galloped out at every gate, met the crowds, and sent them back without any demur to their villages. This ready obedience confirmed my belief that the movement had powerful leaders, and that I and my garrison would soon have been prisoners had I not

frightened the promoters by threatening to use all means, even arson, rather than give in to insurgents.

The Belgians are great musicians. That evening there was to be an amateur concert, to which my officers and I, as well as the prefect of the department, were invited. We settled to go as if nothing had happened, and we did rightly; for so far as appearances went, we were perfectly well received. As we chatted with the leaders of the movement we pointed out to them that the fate of Belgium was to be decided not by the population in rebellion, but by the belligerent armies, and that it would be madness in them to excite labourers and peasants to fight and shed blood in order to hasten by a few days a decision for which they should wait.

An old retired Austrian general, a native of Mons, then told his fellow-townsmen that they had done very wrong in plotting the capture of the garrison. It would have brought calamity on the town, since soldiers may never surrender without a fight. All admitted the justice of this, and from that day garrison and inhabitants lived on the same good terms as before. A few days later the people of Mons gave us a striking proof of their loyalty, under the following circumstances. As the allied army advanced a crowd of vagabonds, chiefly Prussians, got themselves up like Cossacks, and, urged by the lust of plunder, fell upon everything which had been official property during the French occupation, seizing even without scruple the property of individuals not belonging to the army. A strong band of these pretended Cossacks made their way even to the gates of Brussels and looted the château of Tervueren, carrying off all the horses of the stud which the Emperor had formed there. Then, breaking up into detachments, they went marauding all over Belgium. Coming into the department of Jemmapes, they tried to bring about a rising, and when this did not succeed they thought it was owing to the fact that Mons was deterred from pronouncing for them by the fear which the colonel commanding there had inspired among the people. They determined, therefore, to carry me off or kill me; but in order not to arouse my suspicions by employing too many men on that service, they sent only three hundred. The leader of these partisans must have had good information, for, knowing that I had too few people to guard properly the old gates and half-demolished ramparts, he brought his horsemen close to the town on a dark night, and the greater part of them, dismounting, made their way in silence through the streets in the direction of the Hôtel de la Poste, where I had at first lodged. But since hearing that the enemy had crossed the

Rhine I had taken to going every evening to the barracks and passing the night with my troops. It was lucky I did, for the German Cossacks surrounded the hotel, rummaged all the rooms, and in their rage at finding no French officers fell out with the landlord. They ill-treated him, plundered him, and got drunk, men and officers alike, on his best wine.

A Belgian named Courtois, formerly corporal in my regiment, for whom, as one of my best soldiers, I had obtained the Legion of Honour, entered the hotel at that moment. He had lost a leg in Russia in the previous year, and I had been fortunate enough to save his life by procuring for him the means of returning to France. For this he was so grateful that while I was at Mons in the winter of 1814 he often came to see me, on those occasions putting on the uniform of the 23rd Chasseurs, which he had so honourably worn. Now it happened that on the night in question, Courtois, being on his way back to the house of a relation with whom he was staying, saw the enemy's detachment making for the Hôtel de la Poste. Although the brave corporal knew that I no longer stopped there, he wished to make sure that his colonel was not in any danger, and boldly walked into the hotel, taking his relation with him. At the sight of the French uniform and the decoration the Prussians were infamous enough to assault the poor maimed man, and try to tear the cross from his breast. The old soldier tried to defend his decoration; the Prussian Cossacks killed him, dragged his body into the street, and continued their orgies.

In proportion to my weak garrison, Mons was so large that I had fortified myself in the barrack and concentrated my right defence on that point, forbidding my soldiers to go in the direction of the great square. I had been informed that the enemy were there, but I did not know their strength, and feared that the inhabitants might unite with them. But as soon as these latter heard of the murder of their compatriot Courtois, a man esteemed by all the neighbourhood, they resolved to avenge him, and, forgetting for the moment their grudge against the French, they deputed the brother of Courtois and some of the most prominent and bravest among themselves to ask me to put myself at their head and drive out the Cossacks. No doubt the excesses which these people had committed in the hotel made every citizen fear for his own family and house, and had quite as much as the death of Courtois to do with their desire to turn the Cossacks out. They would, no doubt, have acted very differently if regular troops had entered the town instead of marauders and assassins. Nevertheless, I thought it my duty

to profit by the goodwill of the inhabitants, and, taking part of my force, I went toward the square. Meanwhile the infantry major, who knew the town well, went, by my orders, with the remainder, and formed an ambuscade near the breach by which the Prussian Cossacks had got into the place.

At the first shots which our people fired on the scamps the hotel and the square were in a tumult. Those of the enemy who were not killed on the spot made off as fast as their legs would carry them, but a good many lost their way in the streets, and were polished off in detail. As for those who got as far as the spot where they had left their horses fastened to the trees on the promenade, they found the major there, and were received by a volley at close quarters. When day came, we counted, in the town or on the breach, more than 200 of the enemy dead, while we had not lost a single man, for our adversaries were too stupefied by wine and strong drink to be able to defend themselves. Such of them as survived the surprise slipped along the ruins of the old ramparts and made off into the country. There they were all captured or killed by the peasants, who were furious at hearing of the death of poor Courtois. He was regarded as the glory of the neighbourhood ; the people called him *wooden-leg*, and he was as dear to them as another wooden-leg, General Daumesnil, was to the people of the Paris suburbs.

I do not quote the combat at Mons as anything to be vain about, for with the National Guards I had 1,200 or 1,400 men, while the Prussian Cossacks were not much more than 300; but I thought I would relate this curious engagement to show how fickle is the spirit of the masses. All the peasants and colliers, for a month before had come in a crowd to exterminate, or at least disarm, the handful of French left in Mons, had now taken sides with them against the Prussians because the Prussians had killed one of their countrymen. I was very sorry, too, for the brave Courtois, who had fallen a victim to his attachment for me. The most important trophy of our victory was the three hundred and odd horses which the enemy had left in our hands. They came nearly all from the district of Berg, and were very good, so I embodied them in my regiment, for which this unexpected remount came very conveniently.

I passed another month at Mons in perfect friendship with the inhabitants, but the advance of the enemy's armies became so serious that the French had to leave not only Brussels, but all Belgium, and re-enter the frontiers of France proper. I was ordered to bring the depôt of my regiment to Cambrai, where, with the horses which we had taken from the Prussian Cossacks,

I was able to replace in the ranks three hundred good troopers returned from Leipzig, and thus to form two fine squadrons, which, under Major Sigaldi, were shortly sent to the army which the Emperor had assembled in Champagne. They attracted notice there, and sustained the credit of the 23rd Chasseurs, particularly at the battle of Champaubert, where Captain Duplessis was killed.

I have always had a great predilection for the lance, a terrible weapon in the hands of a good horseman. I therefore obtained permission to distribute to my squadrons the lances which the artillery officers could not bring away when they evacuated the Rhine fortresses. So well were they appreciated that several other cavalry regiments also asked for them, and were glad to have got them.

The regimental depôts being obliged to move to the left bank of the Seine to avoid falling into the hands of the enemy, mine went to Nogent-le-Roi. We had a good number of troopers, but scarcely any horses. The Government was making great efforts to collect some at Versailles, where a central cavalry depôt had been created under the command of General Préval. Like his predecessor, General Bourchier, he understood the details of organisation much better than war, of which he had seen very little. He discharged his duties very well; but as he could not improvise horses or equipments, and was particular about not sending out any but well-organised detachments, they went off very slowly. I groaned over this, but no colonel could join the army without an order from the Emperor, and, to economise his resources, he had forbidden any more officers to be sent to the war than were proportionate to the number of men that they had to command. In vain, therefore, did I beg General Préval to let me go to Champagne; he fixed my departure for the end of March, at which date I was to join the army with a so-called 'marching' regiment, composed of mounted men from my depôt and some others. Till then I was allowed to reside at Paris with my family; for my lieutenant-colonel, M. Caseneuve, could command and organise the 200 men who were still at Nogent-le-Roi, and I could always inspect them in a few hours. In Paris therefore I passed most of the month of March, one of the saddest times of my life, although I was with those who were dearest to me. But the Imperial Government to which I was attached, and which I had so long defended at the cost of my blood, was crumbling on all sides. From Lyons the enemy's armies occupied a great part of France, and it was easy to see that they would soon reach the capital.

CHAPTER LXXXV.

It is impossible to give any idea of the agitation which prevailed. Few of the inhabitants had foreseen an invasion ; and as for me, who had expected it, and had seen the horrors of war so near, I was in great trouble to know where I could place my wife and little child in safety. The kind old Marshal Sérurier offered them shelter at the Invalides, of which he was governor, and I was calmed by the thought that as the French had always respected the places where old soldiers lived, the enemy would do the same. So I took my family there, and left Paris before the allies entered. I reported myself to General Préval at Versailles, and he put me in command of a small column formed of troopers from my own regiment and from the 9th and 12th Chasseurs, with orders to rendezvous the same day at Rambouillet. There I found my horses and outfit, and took the command of my squadrons.

As soon as Napoleon learnt that Paris had capitulated, and that the two small corps of Marmont and Mortier were withdrawing to join him, he ordered them to take up a position at Essonnes, half-way between Paris and Fontainebleau, and went himself to the latter town as the heads of the columns returned from Saint-Dizier were reaching it, which shows that his intention was to march on Paris. The enemy's generals have since admitted that if the Emperor had attacked them, they would not have dared to accept battle. Behind them was the Seine, and Paris with its million inhabitants, who might rise during the battle, barricade the streets and bridges, and cut off their retreat. They had, therefore, determined to retire, and encamp on the heights of Belleville, Montmartre, and Chaumont, which command the right bank of the Seine and the road to Germany.

But fresh events detained them in Paris. M. de Talleyrand, once a bishop, now married, had been to all appearance most devotedly attached to the Emperor, who had made him Prince of Benevento, Grand Chamberlain, and so on. But his pride was hurt at being no longer Napoleon's first confidant

and director of his policy, and he had, since the disastrous Russian campaign, put himself at the head of the smothered opposition set up by the malcontents of all parties, and especially the aristocracy of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. In the days of his prosperity they had submitted to and even served Napoleon; now they were his enemies, and without openly compromising themselves, attacked him by all available means. The chiefs were such men as the Abbé de Pradt, Archbishop of Malines, M. de Chateaubriand, M. Laisné, and others, all able men, who, directed by Talleyrand, the ablest intriguer of them all, had for some time been looking out for a chance of upsetting Napoleon. They saw that they would never have one more favourable than the present. But though Napoleon was at the moment greatly weakened, he was not quite beaten. Besides the army which had just done such wonders under him, there were Suchet's between the Pyrenees and the Garonne, numerous troops under Soult, and two fine divisions at Lyons. The Army of Italy was still formidable; and thus, though the English were in occupation of Bordeaux, Napoleon could still collect a large force and prolong the war indefinitely if he raised the population, whom the enemy's requisitions had exasperated.

M. de Talleyrand and his party saw that if they allowed the Emperor time to bring up all these troops to Paris, he might beat the allies in the streets, or retire to the loyal provinces and continue the war till he tired the enemy into making peace. The Government must be changed. But there was the difficulty. They wanted to restore the Bourbons, while part of the nation wished to leave Napoleon on the throne, or call his son to it. There was the same difference of opinion among the allies; the Kings of England and Prussia being on the side of the Bourbons, while the Emperor of Russia, who never liked them, was disposed to support the interests of Napoleon's son.

In order to settle the question by taking the first step, and as it were to force the hand of the allied sovereigns, Talleyrand caused a score of young aristocrats to appear on horseback on the Place Louis XV. wearing white cockades. Led by Viscount Talon, an old comrade of mine, from whom I have the details, they made their way towards the Emperor Alexander's hotel, loudly shouting, 'Long live Louis XVIII.! Down with the tyrant!' At first the bystanders were merely stupefied; presently the crowd began to threaten, and the most resolute members of the cavalcade wavered. The first outburst of royalism had missed fire, but they repeated the scene at various points. Sometimes they were hooted, sometimes applauded.

The Parisians required a cry to arouse them, and that which Talon and his friends had started resounded all day in the ears of the Emperor Alexander. In the evening Talleyrand was able to say to him, 'Your Majesty can judge for yourself with what unanimity the country desires the restoration of the Bourbons.' From that moment, though Napoleon's partisans, as the events of the next year showed, were many more than those of Louis XVIII., his cause was lost.

EPILOGUE.

General Marbot's 'Memoirs' end with the first abdication of Napoleon, so that we lose what we would gladly have had—his reminiscences of the Elba and Waterloo period; though a few letters exist giving some scanty details with regard to the Waterloo campaign. From an article by M. Cuvillier-Fleury, published in the 'Journal des Débats' shortly after the general's death, we learn that at the first Restoration he was maintained in the army, and placed in command of the 7th Hussars. As might be expected when Napoleon returned, Marbot and his regiment went back to their former allegiance, and at Waterloo they formed part of the corps under the Count of Erlon; being posted on the extreme right of the French line. On April 10 he had written:—

I have to guard the line from Mouchin to Chéreng. It is not much trouble to do, for the English do not stir, and are as quiet at Tournay as if they were in London. I think that everything will pass of peaceably.

Writing from Saint-Amand in the following month, he still reports all quiet; the enemy's troops deserting in heaps; men flocking 'thick as flies' to the French regiments. 'People think there will be no fighting. Here we think that almost certain.'

By June 13 the complexion of affairs is changed, and he writes from Pont-sur-Sambre: 'I do not think there will be a battle for another five days'—a very accurate forecast. After the affair of June 17 at Genappe, Marbot was promoted major-general; but this appointment did not take effect. The following letter, written on June 26 from Laon, gives Marbot's fresh impressions of Waterloo:—

I cannot get over our defeat. We were manœuvred like so many pumpkins. I was with my regiment on the right flank of the army almost throughout the battle. They assured me that Marshal Grouchy would come up at that point; and it was guarded only by my regiment with three guns and a battalion of infantry—not nearly enough. Instead of Grouchy, what arrived was Blucher's corps. You can imagine how we were served. We were driven in, and in an instant the enemy was on our rear. The mischief might have been repaired, but no one gave any orders. The big generals were making bad speeches at Paris; the small ones lose their heads, and all

goes wrong. I got a lance-wound in the side; it is pretty severe, but I thought I would stay to set a good example. If everyone had done the same we might yet get along; but the men are deserting, and no one stops them. Whatever people may say, there are 50,000 men in this neighbourhood who might be got together; but to do it we should have to make it a capital offence to quit your post, or to give leave of absence. Everybody gives leave, and the coaches are full of officers departing. You may judge if the soldiers stay. There will not be one left in a week, unless they are checked by the death penalty. The Chambers can save us if they like; but we must have severe measures and prompt action. No food is sent to us, and so the soldiers pillage our poor France as if they were in Russia. I am at the outposts, before Laon; we have been made to promise not to fire, and all is quiet.

In a letter written fifteen years later to General E. de Grouchy, Marbot enters more into detail. From this we learn that his regiment formed part of the force which was thrown back *en potence* on the extreme right, fronting the stream of the Dyle, as may be seen in any plan of the battle. The Emperor's instructions, conveyed to him by his old comrade, Labédoyère, who was then acting as aide-de-camp to Napoleon, were, while keeping the bulk of his force in view of the field of battle, to push forward his outposts towards Saint-Lambert and Ottignies; leaving a line of cavalry pickets a quarter of a league apart one from the other, so that when Grouchy arrived the news might be passed along without delay. One of these detatchments reached Moustier about 1 P.M., and the officer in command at once sent back word that the French troops posted on the right bank of the Dyle were crossing the river—*i.e.*, falling back. This intelligence was forwarded to the Emperor, and an orderly officer soon came with orders to Marbot to push as far as possible in the direction of Wavre. Near Saint-Lambert one of his sections fell in with some Prussian cavalry, capturing an officer and a few men. These were promptly sent to the Emperor, and Marbot hastened with a squadron towards Saint-Lambert. There he saw a strong column advancing, and again sent intelligence to head-quarters. But the reply was that it could be nothing but Grouchy; that the prisoners were doubtless some Prussian stragglers flying before his advance, and that Marbot might go forward boldly. Of course he had to obey orders; but soon had proof positive as to the nature of the advancing column. After hard fighting he had to retire, again reporting the circumstances to the Emperor. So possessed, however, was Napoleon with his own view of the case, that he merely sent back the adjutant with orders to Marbot 'to let Grouchy know.' By this time his outposts were all falling back, and soon he was closely engaged with the English left,

near Frischermont, and received the wound which he mentions in the letter already quoted. A report which he drew up later in the year at the instance of Davout, then Minister of War, has unfortunately disappeared.

After Waterloo, Marbot had to leave France; and during the period of his exile, which he spent in Germany, he composed the work by which until the appearance of the present Memoirs he was best known—a criticism on General Rogniart's 'Considérations sur l'Art de la Guerre.' It was this which earned the flattering reference to him, accompanying a legacy of 100,000 francs, in Napoleon's will. 'I bid Colonel Marbot,' he says, 'continue to write in defence of the glory of the French armies, and to the confusion of calumniators and apostates.' (Rogniart had criticised the conduct of the Essling campaign, as Marbot mentions on pp. 350, 351.)

In 1818 Marbot was recalled to France and placed on half-pay. He occupied his leisure by writing another book, 'On the Necessity of Increasing the Military Forces of France,' which was well thought of. Presently his services were again in request, and in 1829 he was placed in command of the 8th Chasseurs. In the following year he became aide-de-camp to the Duke of Orleans, and a second time attained the rank of major-general. From that time till the fall of the monarchy 'of July' he was constantly employed. He received one more wound, when he was nearly sixty years old. During the Medeah expedition in Algiers he was hit by a bullet in the left knee. As he was being carried to the rear, he remarked with a smile to the Duke: 'This is your fault, sir.' 'How so?' naturally said the Duke. 'Did I not hear you say, before the fighting began, that if any of your staff got wounded, you could bet it would be Marbot? You see you have won!' On the death of the Duke in 1842, he was attached to the staff of the Count of Paris, then a child of four years old; a post which at all events may have kept the veteran out of danger. In 1848 he was placed for the last time on the retired list; and in November 1854 his honourable life came to an end. Few men of that age seem to have left a more creditable record.

INDEX.

Abensberg (battle), 293
Abrantès, Duke of. *See* Junot
Adam, Mme., 128
Agreda, 268
Aguesseau, Captain d', 445
Aister, Herr von, 210
Albert, General, 108, 198 *sqq.*, 203, 428, 512, 520, 522
Albert of Saxony, Prince, 186
Albuquerque, Marquis Serafino d', 260, 283, 290
Alexander I. (Emperor of Russia), 152, 154, 159, 168, 172, 231 *sqq.*, 307, 334 *sq.*, 335, 489, 495, 496, 498, 503 *sq.*, 545, 548, 551, 602, 609, 614, 620, 623, 640 *sq.*
Algiers, 688
Almeida, 412, 457 *sqq.*
Alorna, Marquis of (General), 418, 432
Amiens, 96, 676
Amy, Colonel, 425
Andalusia, 254
Andréossi, General, 491
Angoulême, Duke of, 484
Anthony, Prince (Spain), 242
Antilles, 129
Arapiles (Salamanca), 605
Arnold, General, 672
Arrighi, Duke of Padua (General), 638
Artois, Count of, 122
Aspern (battle), 334 *sqq.*, 350
Aspre, Count (General), 380
Aspre, Count (nephew of the General), 400, 402
Assalagny, Dr., 286 *sqq.*
Astorga, 281 *sqq.*
Asturias, Prince Ferdinand of the. *See* Ferdinand VII.
Auersperg, Prince (General), 149, 150
Auerstädt (battle), 185
Auerstädt, Duke of. *See* Davout, Marshal
Augereau, Marshal (Duke of Castiglione), 10 *sq.*, 24, 109 (biography) *sqq.*, 117, 123, 125, 127, 129, 131 *sqq.*, 138 *sq.*, 170 *sq.*, 178 *sq.*, 188, 196 *sqq.*, 200, 203 *sqq.*, 599, 638
Augereau, Mme. (the Marshal's first wife), 114, 117, 127
Augustus (of Prussia), Prince, 188
Austerlitz (battle), 159 *sqq.*
Avignon, 153
'Azolan' (Marbot's charger), 667

Bachelet, Lieutenant, 617
Badajos, 446
Baden, 145
Bagration, Prince (General), 192, 495, 503, 545 *sq.*

Balakhoff, Count, 506
Baraguey d'Hilliers, 555
Barain, Colonel, 316, 376, 475
Barairon, M., 22
Barcelona, 235
Barclay de Tolly, General, 495, 505 *sqq.*, 544 *sq.*
Bareiros, José, 412 *sq.*
Barras (Director), 20 *n.*, 21
Bassano, Duke of, 511, 593, 595
Bastide (Marbot's servant), 60, 63 *sqq.*, 75
Bautzen (battle), 610
Bavaria, 134
Bavaria, King of, 146, 309, 328, 637
Bavastro (a privateer), 476
Baylen, 254 *sqq.*
Bayonne, 674
Beauharnais, Count, 237
Beauharnais, Prince Eugène de, 241, 349, 372 *sq.*, 495, 546, 553, 556, 674
Beaumont, General, 51
Becker, General, 364, 368
Belair, Sergeant, 110
Bellavère, General, 130 *sq.*
Belliard, General, 245, 546, 548
Benevento, Prince of. *See* Talleyrand
Bennett, Lieutenant Charles, 137 *n.*
Bennigsen, Marshal, 205, 207 *sq.*, 223, 634
Berckheim, General, 512, 537
Beresina, the, 573 *sqq.*, 581 *sqq.*
Berghem, Van (Marbot's secretary), 589 *sqq.*
Berliet, Colonel, 425
Berlin, 189 *sq.*
Bernadotte (afterwards King of Sweden), 17, 21, 75, 77 *sq.*, 92, 96, 116, 123, 184 *sqq.*, 191 *sq.*, 203, 373, 385, 482, 496, 607, 613, 643 *sq.*, 646
Bernadotte, Mme., 79, 116, 186
Berthier, Prince (Marshal), 25, 27, 258 *sq.*, 311, 479, 484, 528, 604, 650
Bertin, Captain, 510, 645
Bertrand, General, 165, 316, 625, 638, 643
Bessières, Marshal, 123, 161, 231, 236, 457, 460 *sqq.*, 465, 467, 546, 609
Blancheton, Dr., 411
Blancheville, Major, 91, 94
Blankensee, Colonel von, 628, 632
Blucher, Field-Marshal, 191, 618, 626, 642, 646
Bohemia, 146
Boivin, Lieutenant, 612, 615
Bonaparte, Caroline, 337
Bonaparte, Jerome (afterwards King of Westphalia), 232 *sq.*, 495, 505, 611
Bonaparte, Joseph (afterwards King of Spain), 17, 161, 163, 254, 257, 414, 673 *sq.*
Bonaparte, Louis (afterwards King of Holland), 25, 173

BON

Bonaparte, Lucien, 17, 82, 87 *sq.*
Bonaparte, Napoleon. *See* Napoleon
Bonaparte, Pauline, 80, 96
Bonnet, General, 414
Bordeaux, 684
Bordenave, M., 91, 117
Bordesoulle, General, 505, 620
Borisoff, 569, 574
Borodino, 545 *sqq.*
Boudet, General, 333 *sq.*, 341, 391
Boulogne, 124
Bourcier, General, 93, 489, 682
Bourgoing, Captain, 572
Boutourlin, Colonel, 495
Brame, Major, 109
Bregenz, 139
Brénier, General, 458, 469 *sq.*, 472
Brest, 118 *sqq.*
Brisset, Dr., 368, 452
Bro, Captain, 201
Bronikoffski, General, 574
Brune, Marshal, 123
Brunswick, Duke of, 184 *sq.*
Brunswick-Oels, Prince of, 330
Brussels, 677
Bruyère, General, 394, 610
Buget, General, 41
Buitrago, 275
Bulow, General, 645
Buonaparte. *See* Bonaparte *and* Napoleon
Burg-Eberach (battle), 115
Burgos, 261
Busaco (battle), 106, 419 *sq.*

CADIZ, 129, 137
Cadoudal, Georges, 119, 120
Cambracérès, 17, 403
Cambronne, General, 619
Campbell, General, 470 *sq.*
Campo Formio (Treaty), 18 *n.*
Canisy, Count de, 328
Canning, Mr. Stratford, 496 *n.*
Canon, Sergeant, 43 *sqq.*, 48
Canouville, Captain de, 456
Canrobert, Certain de, 2, 75, 103
Carnot (Director), 20 *n.*
Carrière, 75
Casabianca, Colonel, 445, 475, 486, 529
Caseneuve, Colonel, 682
Cassel, 189
Castaños, General, 254 *sqq.*, 262, 284
Castelnaudary, 11
Castex, General, 493, 508 *sq.*, 513, 515, 526, 538 *sq.*, 573 *sq.*, 597
Castiglione (battle), 114
Castiglione, Duke of. *See* Augereau, Marshal
Catalonia, 128, 236
Catinat, 479
Caulaincourt, Duke of Vicenza, 547, 552, 621
Caulaincourt (equerry), 621
Cavaillon, 31
Certain, De, 2
Cervoni, General, 296
Chabot, Deputy (ex-Capuchin), 16
Chabot (Napoleon's aide-de-camp), 544
Chalopin, Major, 78
Chambure, Captain de, 671
Chamot, M., 170
Champaubert (battle), 682

DES

Championnet, General, 43, 49, 55, 480
Charles IV. (Spain), 238, 242 *sqq.*, 249
Charles XII., 512
Charles, Archduke (Austria), 120, 135, 138, 146, 299 *sqq.*, 332 *sq.*, 479
Charles, Prince (Spain), 241, 249
Chasteler, Marquis of, 242
Chateaubriand, 684
Chauvet d'Arlon, Colonel, 476
Chérin, General, 19 *sq.*
Chévetel, Captain, 109
Chouans, the, 120, 122
Christina, Archduchess (Austria), 338
Christka, 202
Christophe, Colonel, 547
Ciudad, Rodrigo, 407 *sqq.*, 460 *sqq.*
Claparède, General, 341, 442
Clarke, Duke of Feltre, 260, 274, 486, 606
Clary, Mlle., 186
Clausel, Marshal, 414, 434, 548, 673
Coburg, Prince of (Field-Marshal), 177
Cœli, Don Miguel Rafael, 82, 239 *sq.*
Colbert, General, 281
Condé, Prince of, 119
Condorcet, Mme. de, 17
Constantine, Grand Duke (Russia), 161 *sqq.*, 506, 623, 643
Corbineau, General, 207, 513, 539, 569, 578, 590, 622
Coriolanus, 613
Corunna, 282
Costa, Bernardo, 412
Cotton, General, 471
Coudras, General, 586
Courteau, Captain, 523 *sq.*
Courtois, Corporal, 680 *sq.*
Coutard, Colonel, 302
Cox, Colonel, 412
Craufurd, General, 408, 465
Cressensac, 8
Curély, General, 566 *sq.*
Curial, General, 641
Czartoryski, Prince, 172
Czernicheff, Count, 365, 489, 668

DAGUSAN, Captain, 260, 262 *sq.*
Dahlmann, General, 167, 208
Dannel, Pierre, 217 *sq.*
Dantzig, 202, 209, 670
Dantzig, Duke of. *See* Lefebvre, Marshal
Danube, the, 132
Daumesmil, General, 246, 681
David, M., 212
Davout, Marshal (Duke of Auerstädt), 96, 123, 132, 159, 162, 184 *sqq.*, 187, 191, 197 *sq.*, 200, 204 *sq.*, 207 *sqq.*, 296, 341, 377, 544
Debry, Jean, 327
Decaen, General, 191
Defermon, Count, 92, 251
Delzons, General, 553
Demont, General, 91, 341
Denniée, M., 221 *sq.*
Derneberg, Colonel, 330
Desaix, General, 74, 365, 530
Desbrières, M., 474
Desbrières, Mlle. (afterwards Marbot's wife), 474
Desjardins, General, 197 *sqq.*, 207
Despaulx, Dom, 13

DEV

Devance, Colonel, 632
Doctoroff, General, 645
Domanget, General, 543
Donnadieu, Sergeant, 111
Donzelot, General, 108
Dorignac, M., 17, 91
Dorsenne, General, 316
Dresden, 610, 618, 670
Drouet, General (Count of Erlon), 414, 440, 447, 458, 640, 664
Drouot, General, 664
Dubois-Crance, 21, 586
Ducos, General, 82
Dünaborg, 506 *sqq.*
Dürrenstein, 147
Dugommier, General, 11
Duhesme, General, 236
Dulauloy, General, 521, 532
Dulimberg, Adjutant, 466
Dumerc, General, 512
Dumesnil, Colonel, 380
Duphot, General, 478
Duplessis, Captain, 500, 682
Dupont, General, 146, 148, 255 *sqq.*
Durbach, Lieutenant, 487
Duroc, Marshal, 128, 131, 154, 170 *sq.*, 193 *sqq.*, 249, 610
Durosnel, General, 186, 313
Durutte, General, 644
Duval de Beaulieu, M., 677

Ebersberg (battle), 313
Eblé, General, 414, 441, 447, 543, 598
Eckmühl, 295 *sqq.*
Egypt, 27
Eisenburg, Prince of, 362
Elchingen (battle), 145
Enghien, Duke of, 121 *sq.*
Erfurt, 654
Erlon, Count of. *See* Drouet
Escoiquiz, Canon, 237
Esla, the, 278 *sqq.*
Espagne, General, 333, 338
Essling (battle), 334 *sqq.*
Essling, Prince of. *See* Masséna, Marshal
Estresse, Marquis d' (Colonel), 2, 75
Etruria, ex-Queen of, 241, 244, 247
Eugène, Prince (of Wurtemberg), 640 *sqq.*
Exelmans, General, 612, 615, 626 *sq.*, 632 *sq.*, 654
Eylau (battle), 204 *sqq.*, 675

Fabius, 479
Fabvier, General, 548
Fain, M., 649
Faur, Faber du, 584 *n.*
Feldkirch, 136
Ferdinand VII. (Spain), 236 *sqq.*, 240 *sq.*, 249 *sqq.*, 675
Ferdinand, Archduke, 134, 145, 146, 147
Ferdinand (of Prussia), Prince, 188
Ferey, General, 454, 463
Ferlus, Dom, 13 *sq.*
Finguerlin, M. (banker), 210
Fontaine, Major, 519, 540
Fouché (Duke of Otranto), 485
Foucher (a French soldier), 659
Fourcart, Major, 97, 105
Fournier, Captain, 156 *sq.*, 164, 188 *sq.*, 201

GYU

Fournier, General, 465 *sq.*
Fousse (French soldier), 540
Foy, General, 425, 440, 447, 472, 673
Franceschi, General, 71, 74
Francis II. (Emperor of Austria), 141, 154, 159, 168, 614
Francisco d'Assis, Prince (Spain), 244 *n.*
Francisco de Paula, Prince (Spain), 244, 247
Franck, Dr., 353
Frankfort, 169
Frederick the Great, 112, 176
Frederick II. (King of Wurtemberg), 296, 636, 645
Frederick Augustus (King of Saxony), 639, 651
Frederick William III. (King of Prussia), 171 *sqq.*, 181, 184 *sq.*, 187, 193 *sq.*, 196, 232, 601, 609, 640
'Free-and-Easy,' Miss, 127
Frère, General, 275
Friant, General, 156, 185, 665
Frederichs, General, 646
Friedland, 224 *sqq.*
Fririon, General, 368, 401, 410, 416, 420
Froissard, Captain, 212
Fuentes d'Oñoro, 462 *sq.*
Fuentes-Pignatelli, Prince, 283, 289

Gardanne, General, 441
Gault, Captain, 18, 19, 24 *sq.*, 31, 34, 41, 55, 75
Gauthier, General, 380
Gautrin, Colonel, 322
Gavoille, Lieutenant, 91
Gazan, General, 146, 147, 148
Genoa, siege of, 58 *sqq.*
Gérard, Marshal, 78, 544, 553, 598
Gérard (the painter), 161
Germany, invasion of (1805), 132 *sqq.*
Ghorodie, 570
Godard, Colonel, 100
Godoy, Manuel. *See* Peace, Prince of the
Gohier (Director), 20
Golymin, 198 *sqq.*
Gortschakoff, General, 227, 230
Gouache, Major, 408
Gourgaud, General, 495, 498, 544
Graft (French soldier), 510
Graindorge, 424
Grange, M. de la, 326, 329
Gratien, General, 330, 594
Graudenz, 193
Gravina, Admiral, 80
Graziani, Major, 73
Gressot, General, 644
Griffon, Corporal, 528
Grouchy, Marshal, 78, 230, 375, 555, 686
Grouchy, General E. de, 686
Grundier, General, 556
Guadarrama (mountains), 248, 277
Gudin, General, 156, 185, 544
Guéhéneuc, General, 260, 277
Guéhéneuc, Mlle. (afterwards Marshal Lannes' second wife), 358
Guéhéneuc, Senator, 115
Guindet, Sergeant, 178, 668
Guiton, General, 398
Gunzburg (battle), 145
Gustavus Adolphus, 609, 638
Gustavus IV. (Sweden), 192 *sq.*
Gyulai, Count (General), 149, 642, 660

HAM

HAMBURG, 434
Hanau, 666 *sqq.*
Hanover, 172
Harpin (a dragoon), 194 *sq.*
Hatzfeld, Princess of, 190
Hautpoul, General d', 204 *sq.*, 208
Heilsberg, 223 *sq.*
Henry, Prince (Prussia), 112, 179
Hernandez, Don Antonio, 245
Hernandez, Señor, 277
Hernoux, Lieutenant, 596
Herrasti, General Andrew, 407 *sq.*
Hersant (the painter), 294
Hesse-Cassel, Elector of, 189
Hesse-Darmstadt, Landgrave of (afterwards Grand Duke), 187
Hesse-Darmstadt, Landgravine of, 187
Hesse-Homburg, Prince of, 377
Heudelet, General, 197, 207, 414, 471
Hijar, Duke of, 246
Hill, General, 435, 465
Hiller, General, 314, 322
Hoche, General, 114, 530
Hofer (leader of Tyrolese mountaineers), 329
Hogendorf, General, 511, 573, 593, 595
Hohenlohe, Prince of, 182, 184 *sq.*, 191
Hollabrunn, 152, 395
Holland, King of. *See* Bonaparte, Louis
Holstein-Augustenburg, Duke of, 192
Hortense, Queen, 333
Houdetot, General d', 137
Houstoun, General, 465
Hulot d'Hozery, 355

JACQUEMINOT, General, 130
Janowitz (battle), 626 *sqq.*
Jauer (battle), 626 *sqq.*
Jellachich, Field-Marshal, 134 *sqq.*, 138 *sqq.*, 143, 135
Jemmapes, 676 *sq.*
Jena (battle), 181 *sqq.*
John, Archduke (Austria), 146, 163, 349, 375
Joly, Captain, 540
Jomini, General, 613
Josephine, Empress, 17, 120, 249, 363
Joubert, General, 17, 18, 427
Jourdan, Marshal, 479, 672 *sq.*
Junot, Marshal (Duke of Abrantès), 283, 289, 414, 433, 435, 447, 453, 462, 544
Jutterbach, 631

KALREUTH, Marshal, 148
Katt (Prussian officer), 330
Katzbach, the, 626 *sq.*
Keith, Lord (Admiral), 68 *sq.*, 72 *sq.*
Kellermann, Marshal, 123, 639, 641
Kienmayer, General, 146
Kirgener, General, 610
Kleber, General, 530
Kleist, General, 622
Klenau, General, 619, 641
Klingin, General, 119
Koch, General, 443
Korsakoff, 479
Kosciusko, General, 193
Kosen, 660
Krasnoe (ravine), 557
Kremlin, the, 549, 553
Kulm, 622

L

Kulnieff, General, 520, 523 *sqq.*
Kutusoff, Field-Marshal, 146 *sq.*, 152, 545, 548 *sqq.*, 553 *sq.*, 586

LABAUME, M. (an engineer), 495
Labédoyère, Captain, 260, 262, 308, 335, 687
La Bourdonnaye, Lieutenant, 312 *sq.*, 360 *sq.*
Lachèze, M., 24, 61
La Coste, Certain de, 2 *sq.*
Lacoste, General, 284
Lacour, General, 380
Lacour, Major, 611, 615, 617
Laforest, M., 171
Lagarde, 14
Lagrange, General, 446
Laisné, M., 684
Lajolais, M., 120
Lallouette, Lieutenant, 524
Lamarque, General, 385
Lamarre, Mlle. (afterwards wife of Marshal Masséna), 476 *sq.*
Lambert, General, 228, 574
Lami, Jean Noel, 469
Lamothe, Major, 253
Lamotte, General, 453 *sq.*
Lamour, Colonel, 453
Landgrafenberg, 181
Lannes, Marshal, 10, 25, 115, 123, 132, 149 *sqq.*, 161 *sq.*, 177, 181 *sqq.*, 191, 197 *sq.*, 200 *sq.*, 221 *sqq.*, 224 *sq.*, 226, 228, 231, 259 *sq.*, 275, 289 *sqq.*, 326, 328, 331, 333 *sqq.*, 356 *sqq.*
Lannes, Napoléon Auguste (son of the marshal), 358
La Nougarède, Colonel, 487 *sq.*, 493, 529
Lapoype, General, 670
Lariboisière, General, 598
Larivière, Château, 1
La Romana, Marquis of (General), 257, 442
Larrey, Dr., 166, 167, 303, 346
Lasalle, General, 86, 333, 380 *sqq.*
Lasalle, M. de, 257
Lasouski, General, 401, 415
Latour, General, 384
La Tour d'Auvergne, 362 *sqq.*
Latour-Maubourg, General, 282, 555, 610, 641
Launay, M. de, 220
Laurencez, General, 500, 507, 514, 528, 532, 541
Lauriston, General, 378, 492, 551, 582, 638, 640, 651
Lauriston, Mme. de, 210
Laval de Cère, Château, 2
Leclerc, General, 80, 82, 85, 96
Le Couteulx de Canteleu, Lieutenant, 260, 291, 344, 554
Lefebvre, Marshal (Duke of Dantzig), 21, 77, 105, 329, 395
Lefebvre-Desnouettes, General, 191, 279
Lefrançois, Major, 410
Legendre, Sergeant, 524, 528
Legrand, General, 333, 398, 512, 519, 567, 586
Leipzig, 636 *sqq.*
Le Marois, General, 669
Leopold I. (King of the Belgians), 659
Lepel, General, 561
Lepic, General, 463, 466
Lesteinschneider, Lieutenant, 36, 43
Letermillier, Colonel, 438
Lichtenstein, Prince John of, 395, 648
Liégeard, Colonel, 614

LIG

Ligne, Prince de (Field-Marshal), 383
Ligniville, Count of (Major), 404, 406, 420, 459
Liguria, 38
Lindau, 139
Lindenau (bridge), 651 *sqq.*
Lisbon, 433
'Lisette' (a vicious mare), 210, 213, 215, 218
L'Isle, Certain de, 2
Lobau (island), 332 *sqq.*, 366 *sq.*
Lobau, Count of. *See* Mouton, Marshal
Loison, General, 414, 425, 455, 462 *sq.*
Longuereau, General, 613
Louis XIV., 674
Louis XVI., 16, 110, 113
Louis XVIII., 119, 187, 485, 684
Louis Philippe, 257
Louis, Prince (of Prussia), 172 *sq.*, 177, 178, 668
Louisa Amelia (Queen of Prussia), 171 *sq.*, 187, 194, 232
Lubenski, Count, 562 *sqq.*
Luchonski, 559
Luckau (battle), 357
Lutzen (battle), 609

Macard, General, 50 *sq.*
Macdonald, Marshal, 373, 376, 380, 393, 495, 517, 565, 618, 625, 631, 638, 651
Mack, Field-Marshal, 134, 145, 146, 147, 151
Madrid, 236 *sqq.*
Magdeburg, 189, 670
Magon, Admiral, 137
Mainvielle, Lieutenant, 109, 118, 200
Maison, Marshal, 78, 512, 515, 517, 567, 589 *sq.*, 595, 597, 676 *sq.*
Malet, General, 551
Malo-Jaroslavitz, 553
Malseigne, Count de (General), 112
Mancune, General, 425, 465
Manuel (advocate), 486
Marac, Château, 108
Marbot, Antoine (General: Marbot's father), 1 *sqq.*, 8 *sqq.*, 14 *sqq.*, 24 *sqq.*, 31, 35, 40 *sqq.*, 55 *sq.*, 60 *sq.*
Marbot, Mme. (*née* Certain du Puy: Marbot's mother), 2 *sq.*, 6 *sq.*, 24, 75, 104, 131, 292
Marbot, Mme. (Marbot's wife), 562, 608
Marbot, Alfred (Marbot's son), 562, 608
Marbot, Adolphe de, 3, 8, 23, 75, 77 *sq.*, 99, 191, 450, 512
Marbot, Felix de, 3, 75, 130
Marbot, Theodore de, 3, 75, 104
Marchand, General, 414
Maréchal, Lieutenant, 617
Marengo (battle), 74, 647
Maria Louisa, Archduchess (afterwards Napoleon's wife), 327 *sq.*
Marmont, Marshal, 125, 132, 146, 372 *sq.*, 380, 395, 471 *sq.*, 548, 651, 664, 683
'Marshal Stockpot,' 440
Martinique, 129
Marulaz, General, 333
Mascarenhas, Señor, 432
Masséna, Marshal, 18, 55, 59, 72, 77 *sq.*, 106, 123, 132, 139, 146, 311, 313, 331, 333 *sq.*, 340 *sq.*, 367, 389 *sqq.*, 410 *sqq.*, 472 (biography), 476 *sqq.*
Masséna, Augustin (the marshal's uncle), 476
Masséna, Jules (the marshal's uncle), 476

NAP

Masséna, Marcel (the marshal's uncle), 476 *sq.*
Masséna, Captain Prosper (the marshal's son), 390, 459, 494
Masséna, Victor (the marshal's son) 96
Massy, Colonel, 109, 143, 148, 153, 154, 166, 168, 203, 208
Mathis, Captain, 33
Maurin, General, 78, 628
Maximilian, Archduke (Austria), 327 *sqq.*
Melas, Field-Marshal, 71
Ménard, Colonel, 18, 25, 28, 41, 55
Merfeldt, General, 641, 642
Mergey, General, 78
Méric, Mlle. (afterwards Marshal Lannes' first wife), 357 *sq.*
Merle, General, 414, 425, 512
Merlhes, Dr., 91
Mermet, General, 414, 425, 454
Mesler (Viennese mechanician), 351
Meslin (a French soldier), 646
Metternich, Prince, 660
Michaud, General, 638
Michaux, Commissary, 482
Milan, 71
Milhau, General, 663
Mina (Spanish guerilla leader), 291
Mölk (Abbey), 143, 315
Moerner, Count, 192
Mojaisk, 545
Molitor, General, 333 *sq.*
Mollendorf, Marshal, 184 *sq.*
Moncey, Marshal, 123, 238, 262
Mongalvi, Mlle., 6 *sq.*, 11
Monginot, Major, 597
Monier, Colonel, 425
Monk, General, 118
Mons, 669, 676 *sqq.*
Montbrun, General, 275 *sqq.*, 414, 462 *sq.*, 464 *sq.*, 506, 547
Montezuma, Count of, 407
Montfort, Colonel, 653
Montier, General, 105
Montmorency, Constable, 12
Moore, Sir John, 277, 279 *sq.*
Morand, General, 185, 305, 553
Moravia, 143, 145
Moreau, Colonel, 85, 88, 93
Moreau, General, 20, 96, 119, 613, 620
Morland, General, 155 *sqq.*, 164, 167
Mortier, Marshal, 123, 146 *sqq.*, 224 *sq.*, 226, 553 *sq.*, 558, 622, 640, 683
Moscow, 549 *sqq.*
Moskova, La (battle: Borodino), 545 *sqq.*
Moulins (Director), 20
Mounier, M., 99, 360
Moustache (Napoleon's courier), 195 *sq.*
Mouton, Marshal (Count of Lobau), 70, 294, 345, 474
Muller, Major, 33, 177
Mustapha (a Mameluke at Austerlitz), 162, 246
Murat (afterwards King of Naples), 25, 27, 105, 123, 149, 150, 151, 152, 161, 162, 170, 182, 183, 184, 191, 198, 200 *sq.*, 204 *sqq.*, 208, 234 *sqq.*, 239, 242 *sq.*, 247, 328, 495, 543, 549 *sqq.*, 553, 581, 593, 596, 613, 619

Nansouty, General, 506, 638
Napier, Sir William, 413 *n.*, 432 *n*
Naples, King of (1788), 113

NAP

Napoleon (afterwards Emperor): Artillery officer, 11 *n.*; General, 20, 25; First Consul, 37, 60, 65, 71, 73, 87, 96, 102, 107, 115, 118, 122, 127; Emperor, 129 *sqq.*, 133 *sq.*, 138, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 162, 163, 164, 165, 167, 168, 169, 171, 172, 173, 174, 176, 177, 179, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 192, 193, 194, 196, 197, 198, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 209, 212, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 231 *sqq.*, 249 *sqq.*, 257 *sqq.*, 278 *sqq.*, 294 *sq.*, 311 *sqq.*, 327 *sqq.*, 332, 354 *sqq.*, 370 *sqq.*, 393 *sqq.*, 472, 493, 498, 502 *sqq.*, 542, 546 *sqq.*, 552 *sqq.*, 573, 577 *sqq.*, 592, 598, 600 *sq.*, 605, 609 *sqq.*, 614, 618, 621, 623 *sqq.*, 634, 637 *sqq.*, 648 *sqq.*, 657 *sqq.*, 673, 682
Narbonne, M. de, 124
Nelson, Lord (Admiral), 80, 136
Ney, Marshal, 123, 139, 145, 146, 183, 184, 203 *sqq.*, 207 *sqq.*, 228 *sq.*, 229, 416, 448, 506 *sq.*, 543, 555 *sqq.*, 586, 589, 596, 598, 613, 618, 631, 642
Nice, 39
Niemen, the, 231, 598
Noailles, Alfred de, 587
Nordmann, General, 332, 371
Novi (battle), 18

ODIER, M., 649
Oettingen, Prince of, 666
O'Meara, Colonel, 260
Ordener, General, 121
O'Reilly, General, 328
Orleans, Duke of, 97, 659, 688
Orléans, Gaston d', 12
Ostermann, General, 622
Ott, General, 67, 71, 662
Oudinet de Beaulieu, Mlle., 1
Oudinot, Marshal, 149, 224, 372 *sq.*, 493, 499 *sqq.*, 504, 514, 526, 530 *sqq.*, 572, 574, 576, 586, 611, 625

PACK, General, 470
Padua, Duke of. *See* Arrighi, General
Palafox, Count, 283, 289
Palfy, Count (General), 351
Pampeluna, 235, 673
Pamplona, Count (General), 418
Papon, M., 112
Paris, 17, 683
Paris, Count of, 688
Parot, Dr., 517, 646
Parqué, Duke of, 237
Partouneaux, General, 585, 601
Pasqual, 290
Pasquier, M., 118
Paul I. (Russia), 491, 623
Peace, Prince of the (Manuel Godoy), 86, 236 *sq.*, 239, 242 *sq.*
Pelet, General, 311 *sq.*, 415, 446, 450 *sq.*, 459, 475, 487, 557, 649
Peninsular campaigns, 672
Percy, Mr., 438
Pérignon, Marshal, 123
Perquit, Colonel, 629, 632
Pertelay, Sergeant, 32 *sqq.*, 35, 44, 191, 288
Picart, M., 32
Pichegru, General, 20 *n.*, 119 *sqq.*, 613
Piedmont, 50 *sqq.*

SAI

Pilnitz, 632 *sqq.*
Pinoteau, Colonel, 98, 100, 105
Platoff, Hetman, 545
Pleshtchenitsi, 589
Pouzet, General, 275, 345 *sq.*
Poitevin, Captain, 561
Poland, 193
Polignac, the Princes de, 120 *sqq.*
Polotsk, 512 *sq.*, 530 *sqq.*, 567
Pombal, Marquis of, 432
Ponari, 596
Poniatowski, Prince, 543, 638, 641, 651 *sqq*
Pozac, Major, 611, 641
Pradt, Abbé de, 684
Préval, General, 682
Probstheida, 643, 645
Prud'homme, Sergeant, 510, 528, 538
Prussia (war of 1806), 173 *sqq.*
Pyrenees, 437
Puy, Mlle. du. *See* Marbot, Mme.

RADETZKY, 402
Rambuteau, Countess of, 124
Rastadt, 18
Rapatel, Colonel, 621
Rapp, General, 161, 162, 164, 190, 405, 554, 671
Rasout, General, 286, 543
Ratisbon, 302 *sqq.*
Raymond, Dr., 109, 218
Reding, General, 255
Reille, General, 486, 673
Renique, Captain, 494
Repnin, Prince, 161, 162
Resésguier, Mme. de, 10
Révellière-Lepeaux, La (Director), 20 *n.*
Rewbeu (Director), 20 *n.*
Rey, General, 673
Reynier, General, 373, 393, 416, 420, 433, 453, 466, 625, 638, 644, 650
Rhine, the, 132 *sqq.*, 174
Rhone, the, 29 *sq.*
Rivière, M. de la, 120 *sqq.*
Rivoli (battle), 381
Rivoli, Duke of. *See* Masséna, Marshal
Roch, St., 2
Rochambeau, Marshal, 643
Rochechouart, Count, 587 *n.*, 644 *n.*
Roger-Ducos (Director), 21
Rogniart, General, 350, 688
Rohan, Prince of (General), 138 *sqq.*
Romestan, 14
Ronsin, General, 114
Rosily, Admiral, 136
Rostopchin, General, 549, 602
Rothschild (Frankfort banker), 190
Roumestain, Lieutenant, 165, 167
Roussel d'Urbal, General, 627, 629
Roustan (Napoleon's Mameluke), 27, 167, 369
Ruchel, General, 183 *sqq.*
Russel, General, 644
Russian campaign, 493 *sqq.*

SAALE, the, 659
Saalfeld (battle), 177
Sachs-Teschen, Prince Albert of, 329, 388
Sacleux, Colonel, 56, 62, 64
Sainte-Croix, Charles d'Escorches de (General), 362 *sq.*, 371 *sq.*, 380
Sainte-Croix, Robert d'Escorches de, 380

SAI

Saint-Cyr, Carra (General), 333, 399
Saint-Cyr, Gouvion (Marshal), 139, 521, 530 *sqq.*, 559 *sq.*, 562, 566 *sqq.*, 618, 621 *sq.*, 660
Sainte-Église, Colonel de, 256
Saint-Geniès, General, 509
Saint-George, Chevalier de, 10, 110
Saint-Germain, General, 617, 628
Saint-Hilaire, General, 331, 343
St. Jean de Luz, 674
Saint-Marc, General, 290
Saint-Mars, General, 260, 273, 292, 329, 361, 512
St. Sebastian (fortress), 673
Saint-Sulpice, General, 296
Salamanca, 85, 548
Salicetti (Corsican Deputy), 25
Salme, General, 374
Samson, General, 128
Sanchez, Don Julian, 408
Saragossa, 283 *sqq.*
Sarrut, General, 425
Savary, General (Duke of Rovigo), 122, 241, 252
Savary, Colonel, 197
Savona, 56
Saxe, Marshal, 595
Saxony, Elector of (Frederick Augustus: made King by Napoleon), 181, 187, 610, 639
Scherer, General, 17
Scherer, M. (banker), 210
Schilkowski, Lorenz, 488, 510, 571, 575
Schill, Major, 329
Schmettau, General, 185
Schmidt, Corporal, 198
Schneit, Colonel, 614, 658
Schomberg, Count de (General), 2
Schwarzenberg, Prince (Field-Marshal), 495, 565, 573, 618 *sq.*, 641, 670
Scott, Sir Walter, 352 *n.*, 499 *n.*
Sébastiani, General, 509, 552, 555, 604, 626, 641
Ségur, Count de (General), 495, 503, 512, 524, 554, 565, 593 *n.*, 597
Ségur, Octave de (brother of the Count), 499, 512
Sénarmont, General, 227
Septeuil, Captain, 470
Séras, General, 43, 47, 49
Sérurier, Marshal, 123, 683
Sibille, Captain, 22
Sibuet, General, 631
Sicard, Colonel, 108, 222
Sieyès, Abbé, 21
Sigaldi, Major, 682
Simon, General, 97, 425
Smolensk, 542 *sqq.*
Solignac, General, 414, 482
Sorèze, College of, 8, 13
Sonham, General, 638, 642
Soult, Marshal, 55, 79, 123, 132, 161, 162, 182, 183, 184, 191 *sq.*, 204 *sq.*, 206 *sq.*, 281, 445, 674
Souvaroff, General, 18, 112, 479
Spain, 234 *sqq.*
Spain, Queen of, 236 *sqq.*, 249 *sq.*
Spencer, General, 464
Spire (a servant in the Marbot family), 9, 24, 40, 74
Stabenrath, General, 401
Stabs, Frederick, 405

WAR

Staël, Mme. de, 17
Stein, Baron von, 605, 607
Steingel, General, 567
Stettin, 189
Stibar, Countess, 403
Stoch, Baron von, 187, 201, 640
Stoch, General von, 169
Stralsund, 329
Strasburg, 145
Studzianka, 579
Suchet, Marshal, 40, 54, 71, 93, 414, 673 *sq.*, 684
Sudermania, Duke of, 192
Sweden, 192
Switzerland, 133

TALBOT, Colonel, 408
Talon, Viscount, 684
Talleyrand, Prince de, 170, 362 *sq.*, 683
Talleyrand-Périgord, General, 401 *sq.*
Tandy, Napper, 17
Tarragona, 674
Tassin, Lieutenant, 267, 272 *sqq.*
Tautz (a French soldier), 612
Tchichagoff, Admiral, 551, 565, 574, 579, 582 586, 587 *n.*
Teplitz, 622
Tharreau, General, 341
Thiébault, General, 58
Thielmann, General, 613
Tillet, André, 469, 472
Tilsit, 231
Toulon, 11
Toulouse, 9 *sq.*
Torres Vedras, 433
Toussiant Louverture, 96
Trafalgar, 136 *sq.*
Trant, Colonel, 415, 429, 431
Trebbia, the, 625
Trepano, Colindo, 56 *sq.*, 60 *sqq.*, 74
Truguet, Admiral, 118
Tudela, 262
Turenne, 6 *sqq.*
Tyrol, 138
Tzinski (a Polish lancer), 498

ULM, 134

VALENCIA, 254, 673
Vandamme, General, 393, 621 *sqq.*
Vedel, General, 255 *sqq.*
Venice, 139
Verdal, De, 2, 81
Verdier, General, 263, 512, 519
Vernet, Horace (painter), 672
Vial, General, 643
Victor, Marshal, 558, 569, 573, 580, 585, 638
Vienna, 326
Villeneuve, Admiral, 129, 131, 136, 137
Vimeira, 258
Vincent, General, 384
Virion, General, 100
Vistula, the, 197, 599
Vittoria, 673
Vorarlberg, the, 134, 136
Viry, M. de, 260, 262, 305 *sq.*, 337, 343

WAGRAM (battle), 372 *sqq.*
Warsaw, 202

WAS

Washington, General, 672
Waterloo, 686
Waters, Colonel, 458
Wathiez, General, 465 *sq.*, 608, 612, 614
Watteville, Captain, 260, 344
Weber, General, 341
Weimar, 183
Weimar, Prince of, 183
Wellesley, Sir Arthur. *See* Wellington
Wellington, Duke of, 258, 418, 427 *sqq.*, 436, 439, 442, 447, 452 *sq.*, 461 *sq.*, 464 *sq.*, 470, 604, 673 *sqq.*
Werthingen (battle), 145
Wilkomir, 499 *sqq.*
Willatte, General, 78
Williams, Colonel, 464
Wilna, 499, 503, 596
Wilson, Sir R., 506, 593 *n.*, 646
Witebsk, 511 *sq.*
Wittenberg, 670

ZUR

Wittgenstein, General, 495, 499, 506, 509, 512, 515, 524, 527, 536, 566 *sq.*, 586 *sqq.*
Wkra, 197 *sq.*
Woirland, 176, 211, 294, 488
Wrede, Count von (General), 541, 560, 566, 569, 578, 637, 660 *sq.*
Wukassowitz, General, 380
Wurtemberg, 134, 145
Wurtemberg, King of. *See* Frederick II.
Wurtemberg, Prince of, 641

York von Wartenburg, General, 598, 601
Yvan, Dr., 352

Zach, General, 74
Zaniboni, Pierre, 469
Zavniski, 582 *sq.*
Znaym, 397 *sqq.*
Zurich, 19, 479

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